











THE  
HALLOW ISLE TRAGEDY

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BANQUET OF ODIN—PRELIMINARY.

SCARCELY a house of any mark but had its knot of lady company in the evening to discuss the men and measures then assembled in parliament in the long room of the inn.

There was a large party at Belyewane, and no fewer than five clergymen. Reve-

rend Caldwell Gilchrist, Reverend William Gilpin, a young fellow in the next parish, and an imitator of the polished Caldwell, and old Mr. John Moudiwort, probationer, of the Established Church ; Reverend Patrick Sharpe, and Reverend Eben Edinample, of the United Presbyterian.

Mr. Belfeur of Abbeyhall was an unexpected accession to the tea-table. He had driven into the town in the afternoon with Mrs. B., intending to og to the dinner ; but so he had intended for a good number of years past, without achieving the feat of being actually present. However, he assured Dropogrog, and the rest of the lads of the old school, that he was with them at heart : the spirit was willing but the stomach was weak ; and by way of the more gracefully getting off, the prim,

recherché old gentleman recited to them a whole stanza from Bishop Still's fine old drinking song :

“I cannot eat but little meat,  
My stomach is not good,  
But I should think that *you* could drink  
With him that wears a hood.”

Merely substituting the second personal pronoun to suit the case ; whereat the old lads, to whom the words were new, grinned and winked most expressively. Mr. Sheldrake of Cockethat, a toothless, decrepid old man of ninety, but with a spirit that nothing could kill (Dr. Brechin used to assert positively he hadn't a particle of lungs left worth speaking of—nothing but the windpipe and tongue), a great talker, and a great reader of history, remarked : “Egod, childers, I always thought it, and

I always said it, that there must be something in the Episcopalian persuasion as imported into this and the neeborin' land of Scotland, and now ye see, my dears, I was right. When will any of our clergy write a sang like that? the chield's not among them!"

The truth was, that Mr. Belfeur's refined modern leanings unfitted him to be a partaker in this ancient orgie, although, being attached to it from the ties of birth and blood, he wished to see it kept up. The tea-table was more his element.

Mrs. Deerness was looking remarkably well; Effie had never seen her to so great advantage. Poor lady, who could have anticipated how the night was to end with her?

The first report from the banquet was



brought by Grouse ; he came running in to tell them that Melethor had just been called to the chair, Dropogrog having refused to take it again. "They badgered him a good deal," said Grouse, "but the old chap was very stuffy, and determined to resign."

Just before the tea-drinking began, old Miss Moudiwort whispered Effie that she had a presentiment there was something going to happen. "There's ower mony clerical jokes, my dear, ower muckle clerical daffin," said the sister of the ancient probationer.

Effie herself began to suspect that the conversation, from its fuller flow, was approaching the controversial falls ; yet she hardly expected the whole would have been precipitated over in a moment by a

remark from a sprightly woman of the world like Mrs. William Macabodo. I say Effie was beyond measure surprised to hear the first open assertion of the new Church doctrines over the old, made by Mrs. William Macabodo, whose sprightly conversation was in general so attractive. (But the real truth of the matter, which I must here throw into a parenthesis, was that poor Mrs. William was getting excessively tired of this world, and of her own and the good-man's struggles in it. I say that, obliged to ply the needle in secret, not only on her own garments but the Professor's also, the poor lady had that longing after some better world, which fills the mind with feverish hopes, and excites without enlightening the judgment; and hence things are often said that

Christian charity and calmer reason alike disapprove. In a word, poverty in high places, like murder, will sometimes speak with miraculous organ.)

“Most certainly I do say so, Mr. Belfeur : WE are the Church, not *you* !” said the Professor’s wife.

Belfeur still adhered to the old walls, though very far from satisfied at heart with the appearance they were now making in the world.

“The numbers being pretty nearly equal,” he observed, “I trust, madam, your remark does not mean to imply that we, as sinners, are to be excluded from our share in the common salvation ?”

This sounds odd now, but in that day feeling ran very high on the subject. At once, all other talk was hushed. But Mrs.

William Macabodo did not shrink from the dilemma.

“ I say that you at least peril your salvation by remaining in connexion with a body that, although retaining a few good men, is now on all hands admitted to be made up of the refuse and dregs of the Church.” Many are the ills that come of wearing the breeches, but woe is me that a lady, from having to mend them, should say so !

“ Refuse and dregs ! and peril our salvation !” said Robert Belfeur, colouring to the highest tint that politeness permits in argument with a lady. He would have spoken at greater length, but was afraid to trust himself with another word. He sat down. Mrs. Belfeur endeavoured to reply something, poor body, but having a severe

cold, what she said was not very intelligible, the expressions, “If it was not for the cold—mirlygoes—and upon my word some people do!” being all of it that was not washed away.

“Have *you* nothing to say, Mr. Gilchrist?” asked old Mr. John Moudiwort; “hadn’t you better say a word or two, sir, to set the lady right?” This was the old probationer’s serio-jocular way of trying to make up matters.

“Not I, Mr. Moudiwort,” replied the proud Pope.

“Nor I,” said Gilpin; “else it might not be very difficult to show that the Church of Scotland, far from resenting the lady’s opinion,” and so on; he laboured through what was meant to be a cutting speech not worth quoting.

Just as Gilpin had concluded, the clock then striking eight, who should come in but the offending lady's husband on a short retreat from the banquet, to beg the refreshment of a cup of tea. The lynx-eyed Professor immediately perceived that things were not going over well here any more than with himself.

“Your good lady, Mr. Macabodo,” says the Pope, “has just been letting out a secret in your absence; where she got it I don't know, but it seems that we of the Church of Scotland are all——” The reverend gentleman paused, shrugged his shoulders, and in the manner of a celebrated actor he had once seen play Hamlet, pointed three times straight downward with his forefinger. “You understand?” says the indignant churchman.

Mrs. Deerness, to whom this piece of clerical humour seemed sad fooling, looked vexed and annoyed. "Harriet," she said, "give Mr. Macabodo a cup of tea."

The Professor got his cup of tea, stirred it, tasted it, still doubting whether they were in earnest.

"It's quite true, sir, what the gentleman tells you what your wife says," cries poor Mrs. Belfeur, her cold growing worse in the heated drawing-room; "we are all——" Emotion choked the poor lady's utterance.

"I see," thought Macabodo; and then the Professor, with an "Oh! come! good gracious, Marianna," to his wife, made one of those little live-and-let-live speeches at which he was so inimitable. "Be charitable, my dear—more charitable."

To any one really in earnest there is nothing so utterly provoking as the juggling ease with which men of the world can appear on almost every occasion to clothe themselves in the first of Christian virtues. Hitherto Mrs. Deerness had avoided the argument ; she could do so no longer. She took up the Professor, knowing him to be a traitor who had squandered his poor wife's fortune in this world without contributing the smallest iota to her hopes in the next. Her observations were at once temperate and telling. " If women," she remarked, " were too apt in their conjugal relation to be overburdened by the cares of another world, they had the comfort, such as it was, of not carrying their husbands along with them. The gentlemen have it all their own way : difficulties



sink in the ground, differences of opinion vanish in air, before the lusty royal trumpeters of charity !”

“Not a bad definition of the sounding brass of indifference,” whispered Gilpin to his young U. P. brother Edinample.

Macabodo coloured and laughed ; he was too thorough-going a gentleman of the world to take offence at the novelty of a name, “royal trumpeters of charity ;” indeed, it was so perfectly true of himself and his order, that he rather liked it. In short, the Professor laughed till his very roses were wet, so true is it that even to the greatest and neediest rogues a little truth now and then is delicious.

Mr. Macabodo, as his pleasant, easy manner was, said that he would now, in virtue of his *new uniform*, give them some

account of the banquet—which he did—and of the splendid speech he had made. They coughed it down before it was well begun. And among much else that was new to him, the Professor related how he had been introduced for the first time to the mystical mallet, or hammer, of Thor, which in old times smote the surrounding nations. “In other words, and in plain English,” says the Professor, “when I left the courts of Valhalla, it appeared to me that they were in a fair way of ending in a brawl.”

Mrs. Deerness would have rectified my splenetic gentleman’s opinion of the gentlemen of Orkney, but the hour was not yet come, and she was interrupted besides. Seated in the chimney-corner, beside the bright drawing-room fire, with her cambric

and her smelling-salts, it was observed that poor Mrs. Belfeur had been vainly endeavouring for the last half-hour to master the shock she had sustained at the hands of the Professor's wife ; she believed Macabodo to be a real professor, and the woman a real professor's lady ; and now it broke out with a violent preliminary sob in an appeal to the chief of the U. P. Church.

“ I appeal to you, Mr. Sharpe ! ”

“ Hold your tongue, Mrs. Belfeur ! ” cried her husband. Fancy the laird of Abbeyhall in the depths of anxiety and indignation having to call out thus to his wife before company !

“ I cannot hold my tongue, Mr. Belfeur,” continued the agitated lady. “ Mr. Sharpe, I appeal to you, sir. I am sure,

Mr. Sharpe, you never heard the *Calvinism* of our Church called in question before ?”

Sharpe, with a caustic, though good-natured, smile, replied : “ Indeed, no, my dear Mrs. Belfeur, I never did : it is impossible to doubt the general sound Calvinism of your Church ; and I must say to these ladies that they are hardly consistent in calling you names, such as No-Church, seeing that they are Dissenters like ourselves.”

“ Dissenters, sir !” cried the hectic culprit, with excitement : in her better days, before William Macabodo took her from her English home, the pretty Miss —— was as Episcopal a pretty creature as to be found in all Lancashire.

“ Certainly, madam, *Dissenters*,” said Caldwell Gilchrist. The cruel, frigid Pope !

“Cousin Gilchrist,” said Mrs. Deerness, “Dissenters, if you please, from you lukewarm, time-serving Erastian assenters to an impious usurpation of the civil power ; in that sense the Church of Christ will always be proud of the name. In the sense in which you and Mr. Sharpe have just used the term, I beg to inform you that we are *not Dissenters*.”

Sharpe shrugged his shoulders and was silent, for though none could be more bitter in defence of his denomination when put to it, he was a good man, and no stirrer up of quarrels on slight provocation ; he was rather disposed to smile than be angry at the lady’s proud aversion to a name which it was their boast to be distinguished by.

But not so old Mr. John Moudiwort.

The zeal of John, honest man, for the honour of the Establishment was out of all proportion to his preferment and luck as a preacher; he did not, perhaps, intend his words to wound, but his own sensibilities were of the toughest; and besides, it was his joke.

“Indeed, my dear,” said Mr. John—he was distantly related to the family—“indeed, my dear, you are just Dissenters, the same as our friends here are—*only not of so pure a breed.*”

The manner and timber tones of the good but uncouth-looking old man, in his yellow wig, were even more provoking than the matter. Sharpe exchanged a sly glance of triumph with the priest of Stifbakness; but the younger U. P., the silly trifler Edinample, gave way to an

open and uncontrollable fit of laughter, which, running in tears down his pink, chubby cheeks, put an end to the evening beyond the hope or possibility of recovery. Everybody was horrified.

It is difficult to describe the awkward and painful feeling to all parties occasioned by such an outrage on decorum. The woman kind gathered about their hostess; Rachel Shore had the tact to whisper something that provoked her to smile; but ere long, Effie noticed the old symptoms premonitory of a fit—the fixed and darkening eye, the tendency to wander in her conversation; short, vehement remarks fell from time to time over the light drawing-room talk, like the heavy rain-drops before a thunder-storm. A slight incident seemed to mark the direction whither the storm

was tending. Although it was not yet quite ten o'clock, she rang for Bruce, and desired her to go or send over to the inn "for these boys ; tell them to come home immediately !"

The two senior clergymen took the hint, and left soon after. Differing as churchmen, and sometimes positively quarrelling, they still deemed it incumbent upon them to keep up some habits of personal intimacy. Sharpe was a good man, and Gilchrist, bating some pomposity, not a bad ; and each secretly respected the other.

"I would rather anything than this had happened," said the veteran U.P., as they were going down stairs. "I can't imagine what could possess the idiot Edinample ; I never saw him so misbehave before."

"Idiot, indeed !" said Caldwell Gilchrist.



“ But, my dear sir, what can you expect ?  
*We have a few of them among ourselves.*  
It is the common curse of the cloth that  
they cannot be kept out.”

Gilpin and Edinample slipped off next. The latter saw that something had gone wrong, although he had no very clear conception that he himself was the offender—he thought it was poor Mrs. Belfeur. These two young fellows, with at least thrice the quarrelsome conceit of their seniors, felt bound like them to bear with each other, and the result was a sort of cronyship (their calling considered) almost too grotesque in its details to be contemplated. But folly itself cannot altogether cancel the sad and solemn interest of humanity; Gilpin and Edinample, going down stairs, must mingle their regrets, as

their seniors had done before them. Could the young fools but profit by the cup in proportion as they are made to drink of it!

“Dear me,” said Edinample, “what’s all the hurry to-night? It’s positively too bad of Sharpe and Gilchrist both. I never saw them behave so ridiculously—and before supper, too!” Verily, Eben, thou art a bright one!

“Faith, my dear fellow”—Gilpin’s style in private to Mr. Eben was, to a most reprehensible degree, *studiedly* uncanonical—“faith, my dear fellow, I am afraid it means you have put your foot in it here, and that you will never be asked back again:

Then, farewell, enchanting H—r—t,  
Cards and suppers, all farewell.”

“ Nonsense, Gilpin !” said Mr. Eben ;  
“ you’re only trying to frighten ’s.”

“ Not I, upon my soul ; it’s the truth I tell you. Look here : when an old foozle and friend of the family like Moudiwort cracks his joke upon the lady of the house, her particular religious creed, or weak side or sect, or whatever you choose to call it, it’s not considered quite the thing in good society for a gentleman to laugh at the splitting rate you did a little while ago. *Comprenez-vous, mon ami ?*”

“ I—I—I believe—I think I do. Stay a moment—I’ll not be a minute—wait for me here a minute, will you Gilpin ? and I’ll run back and make an apology.”

But the facetious Gilpin replied with a groan, “ Too late, too late ! quite out of the question, Get your hat and gloves,

your umbrella, cane, if you have one—see you leave nothing behind—for rest assured——” And as they pass out into the street, he assures his unhappy friend he will never be asked to darken that door again.

As soon as the reverend gentlemen were gone and the field open to them, the ladies of the party were profuse of sympathetic and consolatory reflections. It was, no doubt, very shocking, they said, but perhaps the best thing was to give a caustic turn to the affair. Old Miss Moudiwort observed they were bound to bear in mind that Mr. Eben, poor lad, was born so, having been subject to the blushing and laughing infirmity from his birth; she had heard that he had made more than one narrow escape, or two either, in passing through his college curriculum. But they

soon saw that the wound of which Edin-ample was the proximate cause was deeper, and extended to persons and considerations far beyond the limited range of an unconnected, though reverend, young man.

Mrs. Belfeur, giving her husband the hint, the Abbeyhall carriage went next. Owing to her cold, she had no very clear conception of what the matter was, but she had now got a quaint—I hardly know how to express it—a sort of editorial idea in her head, that all this turning of the tables was equivalent to neither more nor less than a leading article on the right side, or, the Calvinism of the Church vindicated.

It was now nearly eleven o'clock. Mrs. Shore, who was the last to go, spoke a few kindly words to her aggrieved friend.

“Good night, Margaret. Don’t let this distress you too much. You will be well in the morning.” And taking her daughter aside, she said to her, “Rachel, remain a little yet; I don’t like to leave her alone with these two young girls; you understand her trim better than any of us.”

The old lady slipped quietly out of the drawing-room, and the three girls were left alone with the motionless, deserted figure sitting over the fire, the face hidden and compressed between the clasped hands, the upper part only showing, like the moon’s pale crescent, all else dark as night, bowing before the unapproachable Throne. Unapproachable? The epithet is Effie’s.

“Well I knew,” said Effie, “that the

thoughts and feelings then flying through her mind could not be the thoughts and feelings of prayer, though she might be trying to pray."

At length she looked up, and the outraged woman's heart found vent in words.

Bitter, exasperated words, never altogether wrong, yet as little altogether right; hardly quotable.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Erring, repining, unhappy as I have been, I did not deserve this. Before so many, and not one of them to take my part! Numbered, and worse than numbered, with that silly, childless woman Mrs. Belfeur! \* \* \* \* \* And, lastly, an object of laughter to the pitifulest of their number (oh, priestly usage!), an

under-born, under-bred plough-boy priest, who would never have made a ploughman had he stuck to the birth stock all his days."

"Dear mamma, let me send for Melethor."

"Send for *him* !"

"Would you but try to go to bed, dear mamma."

"No bed, no sleep for me—not here, at least. I know but one place where I might find rest—out yonder in Hallow, where he is lying in uncomplaining dust at his Maker's feet. Yes, I might calm and come to myself there."

Effie felt half inclined to understand her literally, that it was her intention to take boat that night for Hallow. She



rose and walked to the door; to the window, and listened : the night was blowing heavily.

At that moment (bird of ill omen !) a poor relation, the messenger of evil tidings, arrived from the banquet.

NOTE.—THE REVEREND EBEN EDINAMPLE.

An old lady, a friend of the author's, to whom he sent the above chapter for opinion, returned it with the following note : " Grace *may* be given, but common sense *cannot* be given. Mr. Eben E. would have made, I dare say, an unobjectionable draper, but I must protest against the notion of his fitness to be my Mentor in things spiritual. I know nothing more shocking than a weak or vulgar man in the pulpit, and he is both. Abler brethren, it is notorious, laugh at him : they say, 'Come away, Mr. Eben !' Nobody of ordinary cultivation can tolerate him. Age, though it may whiten his head and rob him of his little fopperies, brings him no real respect ; young, he is an object hardly fit to be contemplated—of apathetic forbearance and not the least interest when he is old. The people's choice, it may be said. Be it so ; they are, I suppose, what silly women call 'the weel-faur'd lads,' and what old Professor \* \* \* used to style 'the kail worms of the kirk.' "

## CHAPTER II.

THE BANQUET—PROCLAMATION OF MR. WEATHERBY.

It must be hard indeed, when one comes to think of it, for a man to be the one solitary outcast of a community. Use, no doubt, does much, but still, however humbled or however hardened, the heart will cry out for society.

Cappernairn's pride was to an almost incredible extent hurt by his exclusion on an occasion when, according to his ideas, it

would have been but decent to have proclaimed an amnesty for at least one night ; and as the day of the dinner approached, his heart panted for vengeance. The proclamation of his client Weatherby—though that was now in a business point of view important—was not the primary wish of Jan's soul ; at present 'twas but the means to an end : the apprehension that, after all, he might fail in carrying out his threat, was agony to him.

In this mood of mind the man was of course certain to be either most ingeniously inventive, or most fastidiously nice, or else most impatiently reckless in his choice of means ; anything — no matter what—so that it promised effectively to attain the end he had in view. And upon this point he brooded much and long.

His first, and perhaps most respectable, idea was to apply again to his friend Captain Coaster, and he did so apply. Would the captain undertake to give a toast at the banquet, coupled with a few observations—"to speak a speech of a few lines trippingly on the tongue"—which he, Jan, would set down for him? Coaster was just the very blockhead to his purpose—just the man to inflame and set the whole assembly together by the ears. As I have said, he did so apply. For once, however, Coaster was not the ass Mr. Beal took him for. Since their turn-out in the morning the captain's radical sympathies, lately so warm against the oppressor, had cooled almost to disgust with "Mr. Byle," and he declined to undertake the part proposed. Their last transaction, the captain observed,

had not been so complete. Had the captain been the most sensible man within toll of St. Magnus, as he was about pretty nearly the opposite, he could not have more indignantly declined.

Having thus committed himself to Coaster, Beal did not hesitate a moment in his course. Although his ultimate project had taken no shape as yet—although his brain was unusually vacillating on the subject—he proceeded to take the necessary intermediate steps. By means well known to local agents, he caused expectation to be sown broadcast of the something that might be looked for at the dinner on Friday the seventeenth ; and so much, indeed, was this the talk, that many of his friends would have seriously persuaded Melethor not to go to the dinner. But to this pro-

posal the pride of Melethor Deerness would not listen for a moment. “Let him have out his boast,” he said; “let the poor devil burst, and see how much smoke he will make !”

Cappernairn, in the mean time, had the satisfaction of relying with some confidence on the state of parties doing much to forward his purpose; for at this period, the reader must understand, there was social war between old and young Orkney. If the dusky chiefs of ancient Thule were derided by the latter as boorish, horn-fisted, and obsolete, ancient Thule was not slack in retorting. “A parcel of dawmned linendrapers, by G—!” said Kipperness.

In proposing the toast of the evening, “Prosperity to Orkney,” the new chair-

man delivered a spirited speech, in which he rallied both parties pretty successfully on their prejudices. Old Mr. Sheldrake said it was quite an inaugural address. Indeed, the spirited old gentleman, who foresaw that there was to be a row presently, listened to the chairman's inaugural address from beginning to end in a toothless ecstasy of attention not to be described. At its conclusion, he instantly mounted his own hobby, so as to be ready for the fray.

“ Well, ye see, my dears, now that our chairman's clappet, and I have gotten my breath again, I'll tell you how that passage in history cam about. The historians are a' wrang, clean mista'en, lickens of moonshine; I had it from Sergeant Shanks, who was an eye-witness of the

fact. It was the night before the engagement; the troops were to join battle next morning by screech o' day, when what do you think the wily, d—d Corsican scoundrel did? What do you think he did, Blowness? What do you think he did, Dropogrog?"

"This is more than intolerable," groaned Dropogrog. "Never mind the Corsican just now, Cockethat; we're in present danger ourselves. There's *that* Macabodo getting up — absolutely on his legs — to speak."

Made aware of the common danger, the old gentleman was instantly mute, the eyes gleaming with preternatural light of age, the tip of the tongue just visible, and quivering within the sunken mouth, as he fixed his gaze on the new orator rising



ruddy in the east. "He is going to speak, sure enough," observed the ancient gentleman.

This unfortunate attempt by Professor Macabodo, in which he was defeated and driven to the tea-table, was the first commencement of hostilities. The beleaguered chiefs, who had borne in stubborn silence the brunt of their chairman's clever address, now rushed to the breach, a dozen or more on their legs at the same moment. Kipperness seemed for a while to predominate, until there came a strange whistling cry (supposed to be from the old history reader) of "Condense ! sit down, Kipperness ; you canna condense. Dropogrog, speak !" And Dropogrog spoke, brief, as with the blast of a trumpet :

"Gentlemen and fellow-countrymen, it's

a saying in our old world, ‘They must be fain of new hose who would try to foot huggers;’ and again, ‘Look to your wool, for a silk merchant’s among you.’ I have just one question to put. Will our chairman now believe his own eyes and ears? Having witnessed the extent of the man’s folly in the late attempt upon this large meeting, does he consent to give the man up? I ask the chairman, setting aside the merit or demerit of the man’s introduction into this country—putting his whole improvements in a bag”—(A voice: “Shake them weel up, Dropogrog”)—“putting, I say, his whole improvements in a bag out of this discussion altogether—what man in his senses would have attempted *to introduce business at a meeting like this?*”

The argument was a cogent one: what

man in his senses would have done so? What but sheer poverty could have driven a man to do so? Melethor felt the full force of the predicament. He replied, however, that having taken up Mr. Macabodo at what he thought he was worth, he would not part with him for less. He did not believe in all the sanguine professions of Mr. Macabodo, but he saw no occasion — his friend Dropogrog must excuse him for saying so—he really saw no occasion for being in such a wool panic at this visit of the silk merchant. At any rate, there was no danger of his meddling the bell wethers of the flock.

Whereupon the chief of the rocky isle, more wroth than ever at the laughter of young Orkney, called upon his good friend, Master Melethor, to take very good care

how he took up the specious and popular cry of "old prejudices," lest peradventure, in so doing, he should be insulting his country's gods.

To return for a moment to the excluded Cappernairn. Having failed to interest Captain Coaster in the cause, his next application was to the new proprietor of Brok; he sounded Mr. Shurlson, but Ludowick, though not averse to the thing, and promising to back it up with such countenance as he might see fitting, was not so disposed to take upon him to do the initiative. "Look you, sir," said Ludowick, "I will fight in my own quarrel should ill fortune ever blow me such a thing, but I am not going to run any such risks by meddling with what does not properly concern me."

In like manner he sounded one or two others with no better success. At length, on the last day, the day of the banquet, chance threw in his way a choice of two instruments, either of whom, he thought, might suit his purpose. The first was parson Logan's friend, mad Rob Ingles, from Hallow. He met Rob prowling about the town, and asking him what he did there, Rob replied, with his usual pharisaic conceit, that he was there like other folk. "And if," added Rob, with a supercilious fling at Mr. Beal himself—"if I am not to have a seat at the boord, there's mair o' 's on the same spit left to rizzer out-by."

"Very true, Mr. Robert, very true," said Jan, with a smile. And then he asked Rob whether he would not like to

see the company, and whether he would undertake to deliver a packet of despatches in such and such a manner. Rob readily undertook the business, and, to show his alacrity, he gave a sample of the manner in which he was to pass the waiters congregated about the door : clapping his hand to his wry mouth—the fellow’s voice was dissonant as a cow-horn wound before the booth of a village show—he was to burst upon them, exclaiming, “ Out of my gate, ye servers of the Boord of Babel !” But this was just what Beal was afraid of—of the fellow’s malignant violence overdoing the thing ; it was quite clear that Rob would out-Herod Herod.

He decided, therefore, to discard Rob and to employ the other, who was a letter and parcel carrier (so that the thing was

more in his vocation besides), a well-known, harmless little hunchback, rejoicing in the more gentle designation of Robbie Lapwing. The mannikin, whose greatest failing was that he sometimes took a drop too much, was just sufficiently witted to discharge with honesty any little commissions entrusted to him ; he spoke in a shrill, high voice, as if to make up for his diminutive stature, admirably adapted to deliver with good effect the packet now put into his hands (and a retaining shilling along with it) by Mr. Beal. "Where are you going to the day, Robbie?" the passer-by would ask him on the road. "To Strumnes-s-s-s!" was the reply, with a prolongation of the last syllable, quaint and quavering as the cry of his namesake bird overhead.

Pursuant to his instructions, then, the little hunchback carrier made his appearance at the banquet at the right time—just a few minutes after Dropogrog's warning to his friend in the chair. Groping his way through the group of waiters, his entrance was scarcely challenged, or if he was asked where he was going? what did he want? Robbie's plaintive "Important letters" dissolved all opposition. At length he stood just within the door. He might have had a dram, but not more. His first act was to uncover. Then, with his hat on the floor at his feet, his long-tailed blue coat touching the ground behind, he held up a packet high as arm and voice could reach, wholly unconscious of the mischief he was about to occasion :



“For his honour the laird o’ Bletherentlet! Is he he-e-ere?”

At once the company were silent. At the same moment, from the opposite table, a number of young men (Frederick Shore, Cromarty, and others) congregated about Weatherby, who was confidently expected to be the hero of the night, called out in reply, with a half-seas-over laugh, “Yes! here! this way! pitch it over, Robbie!” The packet was pitched over, caught, and handed to Mr. Weatherby, who put it in his pocket with a grave, a very grave face, and his colour going like an alarum bell.

The incident was immediately followed by such a hubbub of talk as, no doubt, its contriver counted upon. Allusion and

inuendo flew from mouth to mouth, and it was plain that from that moment the terms were flax to the flame between the chairman and his company. The train was laid. And at length an individual of sufficient hardihood arose to apply the match.

This was Ludowick Shurlson, the new laird of Brok. Ever since his purchase of that property Ludowick had been looking for an opening into better general society. Such an opening now, as he conceived, presented itself. To support Mr. Raby Deerness of Bletherentlet was an opportunity not to be let slip; and accordingly, calling for a toast, he begged leave to propose his friend Mr. Weatherby Deerness of Bletherentlet. He had just a very few observations to couple with the toast, he

said, and delivered a short, highly metaphorical speech, that caused a great sensation. It was time to have done with damt allusions and supposed underhand cases—if underhand was in company let upperhand show himself. In conclusion, he begged to remind Mr. W. D. of the monarch who lost a city by putting his despatches in his pocket and not reading them.

Mr. Shurlson's toast was regularly drunk by the company in that quarter of the tables.

“Hush ! silence ! hear Mr. Weatherby—hear Bletherentlet !” And then Weatherby rose in reply to the toast.

He was no speaker at the best. He began, faltered, and began again ; tried to encourage himself with a joke and laugh—

it ended in a laugh; there were winks and titterings far away down—a thundercloud of silence in the region of the chair—and then the lightning leaped forth.

“Sit down, man, and don’t make a d—d fool of yourself,” shouted Markus Skeldar from the chairman’s right hand; Melethor himself adding, “Raby, do you hear me? sit down!—you had better, I tell you.”

“I think I better had,” said Weatherby, and sat down with a face like a baker’s, the whole table now in a light blaze looking at him. For what blaze can be more terrible in its way than some hundred and fifty human faces burning with the suspicion of something wrong, and their passions inflamed by social party politics and punch?

A most heedful and horrified witness of all this was one Gilbert Gruther, a second or third cousin of the laird's. Gruther held, if I am not mistaken, some situation in the Customs. He was one of your dull, hopelessly correct mortals, peculiarly fitted to be the bearers of ill news, having nothing of the lively malice proper to the character, but a kind of lugubrious idea that it is their duty. This Mr. Gilbert Gruther, then, with a face painted in all the ghastly colours of relationship proper to the character, made his appearance at nearly eleven o'clock at night in the drawing-room at Belyewane.

“Mr. Gilbert! is it you, sir?” said Mrs. Deerness; “take a chair, sir—sit down.”

Gruther sat down, and told his story simply and effectively enough, with a

power of prosing into minute details which such dismal fellows almost always possess. Mrs. Deerness heard the recital to an end, then thanked him for the trouble he had taken, and asked after Mrs. Gruther and the children, the whole concluding with a ceremonial glass of wine.

But when the man was gone——

This was the worst fit Effie had yet seen her have. At length a flood of tears came to her relief, and she went crying to bed. She seemed to understand from Gruther's account that there was an actual brawl among her sons at the inn.

The three girls returned to the drawing-room miserable enough : " Could not," said Rachel, " that idiot Gilbert Gruther have kept this till to-morrow ! " Harriet was crying, but rather lightly than heavily ;

she was too young to comprehend what her mother suffered, or even to guess at the nature of the terrible attack.

Some ten minutes afterwards, sitting over the drawing-room fire, they heard the street door open and shut violently. Shore, jumping up, said it was the boys at last, but the house remained all too still for that; they ran up-stairs to her room, accompanied by Bruce, who had also been alarmed by the door-clap. As Effie feared, Mrs. Deerness had left the house.

“Miss Rachel,” whispered Bruce, “will you run for your mamma; she’s in a waking faint;” what Bruce called a waking faint being probably instant and extreme hysterical prostration occasioned by the shock. She referred, of course, to Miss Deerness.

At the same time Effie got her bonnet and shawl, and ran instantly down to the harbour, but owing to the crowd about the harbour as well as in the streets, she was only just in time to see them sail. It appeared that Captain Kith, by order of his master, was lying with the *Tom Tub* at the low-water stairs to take some friends over to Shapinshay, and of this Mrs. Deerness was aware. Effie could see by the pier-head light the pale features of the terrified and agitated captain. He appeared to beckon to her to get another boat and follow.

Whether this impression was correct or merely a fancy, Effie acted upon it without losing a moment. She had little expectation, indeed, of overtaking Mrs. Deerness, and still less that she would be persuaded



to return; but all the remedy that the case now seemed to admit of Effie resolved to hazard, viz. to get another boat and follow, and by that means to keep down the public talk that would be sure to follow a solitary flight.

Adam Birkenhead, whose wife had been a servant at Belyewane, lived just at hand: to Birkenhead's, then, she ran, and having engaged Adam to get out his boat, the next step was to secure for the expedition the aid and countenance of their steward, William Cults; the thought did occur for a moment of going or sending to the inn for the young men, but twenty objections, before she knew where they came from, cried out against such a risk of publicity.

Half an hour, however, had elapsed since the sailing of the *Tom Tub*, the wind

had risen considerably since, it was a wild, rough, dark night, and there was a difficulty in persuading the steward. He heard Effie's tale with staring eyes, a wide, irresolute mouth, and such short ejaculations as "Guide us !" "The like o' that !" &c. Even when they were down at the low-water stairs, and Effie was on board, Cults still made a stand.

"This is wild wark, men," said he, "and twice at a woman's bidding, forby ; and all because of a second-hand report brought by a wandering yagger that Hallow House was on fire this afternoon." (Effie smiled to herself at this sample of the steward's invention.) "What do you say yourself, Adam Birkenhead ? On sowl and conscience now, and the young wife at hame, is this a night to venture out in ?"

Birkenhead reproached the steward with his cowardice. "What a plague, man Cults, is the matter? Has the old woman up-by been crossing you—or kissing you—that you have turned hen-hearted?"

But the steward was quite as much a hero as the other, only the sea was not his element.

"D—n it," said Cults, and stepped on board, "if it comes to that, I care less for my life than you do, you sea cockerel! it's the possible waste of life I was thinking of. But you are skipper here, and I am only supercargo."

And now, as the hoisting sails flapped loud in the wind, Effie asked him, in a tremulous whisper, whether he thought there was much danger? "They say there's nane," replied Cults, sulky and even

savage at the boatmen, but he was civil enough to Effie; he added, "God grant it be sae, lassie, for your sake." In reply to this, Effie, reflecting that she had no right to take the steward against his will, ventured a modest hint that he might yet be put on shore, but this Will's manhood at once rejected: "Whisht, lassie, whisht!"

It should have been mentioned that Effie, in the hurry between Adam Birkenhead's and the steward's, ran back to the house and left for Mr. Deerness an important letter—the letter referred to in that conversation with her brother, parson Logan, as being then written and ready in case of emergency.

## CHAPTER III.

A REVEREND MORNING CALL—NEGOTIATION—MR. ROLLOCKSON  
AT CAPPERNAIRN CASTLE.

“ You can’t go home to-night—you had better take a bed with us,” said good Patrick Sharpe, speaking from habit in the plural, although the years were now creeping in apace upon himself (the seventh since Mrs. S. had slept in dust), and his two daughters, the last of his family surviving, were both married and away from him.

“ It is a naughty night to swim in,”

Caldwel Gilchrist replied, accepting his U. P. brother's invitation; at the same time, lovingly enough, he linked arms with the tough old Dissenter, the better to steady themselves going round the street corner, where it was anticipated the wind would be ready with the sweep of a mower to blow their great-coat skirts about their legs. The night was rough certainly; but after the scene which had just occurred at the late drawing-room, the wildest night that ever blew from Kirkwal to Stifbakness could not have been more imperative with both reverend gentlemen—the one to make such an offer, and the other to accept. Such things don't occur every night, and when they do they are the very bonds of amity and the cement of clerical life.

They had an egg together—"spare feast, a radish and an egg"—or some such fasting trifle, to season their talk of Mr. Eben, whose ears were again treated to a still more severe tingling in absence. In the portion of their conversation relating to Mrs. Deerness their remarks were more guarded: Sharpe's brown-freckled features showed an occasional twitch of something like a smile, and his eyes a little more, perhaps, than their wonted glisten; the other's exhibited only profound and unmitigated anxiety.

Mr. Gilchrist's sympathetic interest in his kinsfolk (a pre-eminent virtue with this reverend gentleman, as the reader may remember) brought him to Belyewane an early visitor in the morning.

He was coldly received by his kinsman

the Master—he even affected not to notice the half-proffered hand; at which Caldwell's anger was a little kindled—a small matin flame, so to speak, on the altar of his self-esteem.

“My dear Melethor,” said he, “what is the matter? Tell me, and tell me calmly. We had a little——” he hesitated for a word—“a little *bruit* last night, occasioned chiefly by the silly, inexperienced young man Edinample; I trust the matter can have had no serious consequences. How is Mrs. Deerness?”

“That I would give something to be able to tell you,” replied his kinsman. “I heard of the bruit, as you term it, from those who were present—by which I understand you were clerically five to one. I am sorry to have to tell you, Mr. Gilchrist,



my mother left the house last night: she took boat, as we conjecture, for Hallow, but whether she ever reached Hallow I can only refer you to that hopeless waste of waters my friend here and I have just been studying this hour past."

Mr. Rollockson was the only other person present at the interview.

"You amaze me!" said Caldwell Gilchrist; and Caldwell, who was a tall fellow (standing full six feet in his shoes), looked out over their heads at the Bay of Kirkwal rolling in a sea that caused the shipping in the harbour to wave like a bed of bulrushes, the gilt vanes seeming to multiply in numbers as they whistled together in the blast. It was obvious that no boat could put out in such weather, and hitherto they had looked in vain to descry a sail

running in by which they might hope to glean some intelligence.

Personally, as well as professionally, James Rollockson took a deep interest in the family, but from his constitutional peculiarity of temperament, suspense had the effect of making him almost light-headed. He spoke of the thing as "this most extraordinary elopement," and then begged pardon for the expression. "Pardon me, my distressed and exasperated friend, I hardly know what I say."

Caldwel Gilchrist caught at the word; and understanding from his cold reception that the chief blame was attached to himself, the representative of a Church once the boast of the land, and now in difficulties and disgrace, he was not apt to impose much restraint upon his tongue:

accordingly, with a palpably heightened complexion, he said, addressing himself to the Writer to the Signet, “The expression, sir, requires no apology : elopement’s the word ; eloped with a phantom in an Evangelical creel !”

This the Pope of Pomona (as Mr. G. was sometimes called) delivered with exceeding testiness, or, as we say in the north, teeth. His kinsman turned upon him in no inferior mood. He said : “I quite concur in the fitness of the expression, but, by ——, Mr. Gilchrist, give me leave to say it was not becoming the mouth of a clergyman, and one, too, of the party.”

Of course Caldwell Gilchrist had his reply—in a thrilling passion, but keeping his temper wonderfully. It is unnecessary

to rehearse all that passed. Like many well-intentioned, but rather impetuous gentlemen, what he said was in the main perfectly correct, and only worse than useless from being so utterly out of place, like sour fruit shed before its time: and after a few concluding remarks on what he was pleased to term the blighting effects of fanaticism (which he compared to fire winds on the natural herbage), the priest of Stifbakness took his leave to return home to his own diocese.

About eleven o'clock the gale showed signs of abating, and Melethor resolved to extend his inquiries to the neighbouring island of Shapinshay; Rollockson walked over with him to the beach to see him embark at the nearest point where a boat was to be had on "the String"—so the

narrow frith between Shapinshay and the mainland is termed.

Before taking boat he reminded James of what had previously formed the subject of some conversation.

“What was it? I forget,” said the mercurial W. S.

“While I am across there, I wish you would call on Beal, at his old castle of Cappernairn—this is one of his days at home—and settle that affair of Weatherby’s the best way you can. In the state of mind my mother would appear to be in at present, I am most averse to run any additional risk from that quarter. What do you think about giving Beal a call?”

Mr. Rollockson could not say that he had any great fancy to visit so dangerous a beggar in his own den; but that, if his

friend wished it, he supposed he must. As to hushing the matter up with them—— But Melethor embarking, the rest of the sentence went muttering down the wind. And so they parted for the present.

Now, the truth was, James Rollockson had no notion of giving in to Messrs. Beal and Weatherby, if it could possibly be avoided. He thought he should be able to do better for his client than that: the sort of game Beal seemed to be playing was clearly desperate; and accordingly it was with views differing considerably from the letter of his instructions that about one o'clock he knocked at the door of Cap-pernairn Castle.

An old woman half opened the door, with what the country wives in Orkney call the side of the head answer. “We’re

no needin' onything the day," mistaking him for a pedlar. She had the appearance of a common domestic servant, but was in reality Beal's mother.

"I am no pedlar, my good woman. Is Mr. Beal at home?" said our friend; and after a brief absence of the janitress to inquire, he was at length ushered up-stairs into the castle parlour, where the master of the house, his cheek just slightly edged towards the approaching visitor, stood at one of the windows, looking out on the restless and agitated ocean. The tablecloth was already laid for dinner; there were covers for two; a circumstance which seemed to intimate either that he had somebody in the house with him, or was expecting a guest.

The usual observations on the weather

formed an appropriate introduction to a somewhat embarrassed pause, which was at length broken by the solitary laird. At the same time it did not escape our friend's observation, sharpened by a slight feeling of uneasiness, that Beal appeared to have been suffering from ennui, and was glad to see him. "May I inquire what may be the object of this visit, Mr. Rollockson? You come, I presume, on business of some kind?"

Mr. Rollockson said: "Why, no, Mr. Beal, I can't say that I do. Being over on this side at any rate, I thought I would give you a call."

"Out of pure friendship and old acquaintance," said the sombre lord of the castle, with a smile. "Tut! tut! Mr.



Rollockson, that is not the way you Edinburgh noblesse of the profession throw away time on their country cousins forty times removed."

Mr. Rollockson laughed, and said that if he insisted on it they could have a little business conversation also, as well then as at another time. "For instance, between ourselves, what length are you with our young friend Weatherby—with Bletherentlet?"

"Between ourselves, just where we were," was the reply.

"That, I should think," said R., in the same strain of professional jocularitv, "must be a long way behind our young friend's wishes."

"Very likely," said Jan, twirling his

watch-seals; “our young friend—no disparagement to my client—is in some respects a goose.”

“And as you are going to make an *Orkney* goose of him—hem——”

But the darkening scowl he encountered warned Mr. Rollockson to proceed no further in that joke; neither *incubation* nor the classical *ab ovo* would have made it safe for him to talk to Cappernairn in his own castle about the time he was taking to bring out a goose!

Such unprofitable talk was, therefore, instantly merged in the rites of hospitality. The master of the house pulled out his watch, the seals of which he had been impatiently twirling; he looked the hour o'clock, and said: “Well, sir, I ex-

pected a friend, but I don't think he's coming now, and if you like to stay and take pot luck, it's not every day sends us such company in this lairdly wilderness of ours."

Although far from feeling at his ease, professional motives, and a strong spice of natural curiosity to see something more of a man whose character was so blown about by the winds of hearsay, induced Mr. Rollockson to accept the invitation; and his host, calling down to the old woman by the name of Madre (probably for mother), dinner was put upon the table—a neck of mutton and broth, not amiss fare in a country-house where they dine at the ancient and frugal hour of one.

After dinner Jan proposed a tumbler.

“I can promise you a tumbler of brandy toddy, sir, that you never tasted the like of in modern Athens or Auld Reekie either.”

“Yet both are famed for their importers and judges,” said James Rollockson, politely.

He was astonished at Beal's vigorous powers of conversation. There seemed to be no end to his store of anecdote—his string of remark rambling and even genial—his reminiscences of people he had met. It seemed as if Nature, to compensate for the cruel solitude he was condemned to, had given him a power of assembling around him at any time a company of those shadowy personages who, from absence in other parts of the world, or having departed this life, were not nearly so fastidious as his more immediate living neigh-

bours. R. took the liberty to inquire what might have been the origin of this ill feeling, but he would give no account of it beyond the general assertion that they had *broken his gall*. “Origin!” he exclaimed, with great bitterness, “it’s a series! an appointment! without origin or end that ever I heard of.” But of Mrs. Deerness and the late Mr. D. he spoke with a feeling and respect that at first struck his auditor as peculiar, and afterwards as most edifying: in short, the weather outside continuing pressing, the gale breaking up in smart showers, and the dash of the tide now at full and near, and the brandy, no less than his host’s conversation, excellent, our friend’s social sense was carried captive, and he began to think Mr. Beal a much maligned man, and decidedly the

most entertaining company he had met for a long time. In fine, and in a word, Mr. Rollockson forgot the business he had come about.

He was recalled to it, however.

The sederunt had extended to about an hour, when Beal, in the reminiscences of people he had met, struck the name of Davie Athens in a tone that caused his rapt and listening guest to start. "And how is my old friend, your clerk Davie? I fancy he never comes to Orkney now at all. Had he been in the country, I could have sworn I saw him yesterday on Inganess Sands sorting a hand at whist!"

Inganess, the most convenient point on the route to Hallow, was the locality named in Davie's instructions where he was to land and give notice of his arrival.

To say that James Rollockson looked disconcerted would give but a faint picture of what he felt; his mind was struck from the point—with the strangest fit of wandering imaginable—much in the same way as when one hears a chamber bell rung suddenly and violently in a distant part of the house: he thought of the firm, of his partners Brandibrand and Baliol, that he was back in his own room and heard old Brandibrand coming in swearing drunk with Baliol at his heels; then, and only then, he awoke from his momentary trance to the full consciousness of his situation. Well aware of the insurrection of the blood that must have taken place in his usually pale cheeks, he was considering how far the change of colour might have betrayed him, when his northern contemporary put

an end to all doubt on the subject. Jan burst into a loud and angry laugh in his face.

“ A d—d unhandsome suspicion of you, Mr. Rollockson, to bring the men all the way from Fair Isle to subject them to a private examination in Hallow! But for the merest accident of my having some business at Inganess yesterday, and my catching a glimpse of my old friend Davie on the sands, and shortly after that seeing the *Olive* of Stromness, homeward-bound, standing away with Davie down the wrong side of the islands, all this march you would have stolen upon me, and I never had heard a cheep of it! Upon my word (this was intoned in his facetious manner, but with a severe eye), it would not be exceeding the bounds and severity of the law,



and only a just punishment, to give you a night's imprisonment !”

“ What, sir !” cried R., in the alarm of the moment believing the threat of imprisonment literal. Cases of private imprisonment, however, being extremely rare, he presently laughed at his apprehension ; as did also his host.

“ Of course,” the latter said, “ that was a joke. But still I must say you have treated me on rather the shabby side of professional courtesy : not that I wonder at your having doubts, as I myself had when the late Hallow first broached the subject of a division of the property ; but having such doubts, you might at least have asked me to produce our witnesses. The thing might then have been managed quietly, and no more heard of it.”

Mr. Rollockson, well knowing that the story of Jan's outwitting him would come to the ears of the firm some day, put an end to this kind of catspawing. He said, a little coldly and haughtily, "Have the goodness to come to the point, Mr. Beal. Your taunt is quite irrelevant as applied to me. If there has been any want of straightforwardness, it was you yourself who set the example."

"Ay! indeed, Mr. R.; in what respect?"

"This is neither the place nor the time for discussion. I may ask, however, why this deed you found on was not at once produced?"

"In the first place," said Beal, "how the devil could I produce a paper that was lost, and not in my possession to produce?"

In the next place, give me credit for a little consideration, although I don't stand on quite the same exquisite footing that you do in the confidence of the whole family. As matters now stand, however, I am prepared to say that I will concede to yourself personally what I never would have yielded in this world to your client, Melethor Deerness, an opportunity, namely, of coming to an amicable settlement without endangering the happiness of Mrs. Deerness. For it's there the danger lies."

Mr. Rollockson nodded assent.

"If you can indeed afford me that, Mr. Beal——"

"More than that, sir; I can show you the original draft—but that is nothing—I can show you letters of instruction to

me on the subject from the late Hallow, as far back as the year twenty-eight, all giving an account of how the idea grew up in his mind. Step this way, sir. These are papers I don't leave lying about."

He led the way into an unoccupied room adjoining, and thence along a narrow gallery lighted by a number of small windows; at the further end was an apartment, the sanctum of the castle.

"It's the original chamber of dais," said Jan, making a ceremonial pause at the door, "though it has never been used as such in my time. I only use the room for keeping a few private papers in, and as a place of sepulture for some other sma' chattels referring to earlier days. I'm seldom in it. In point of furniture, gilding, and other ornature, the apart-

ment, I believe, is reckoned a very curious relic of the old fashionable world. Walk in, sir."

He opened the door, and Mr. Rollockson walked in. The apartment was equal to any of the size in Holyrood.

But what was the utter amazement of the Writer to the Signet, when, turning round to compliment the owner, he found his host vanished, and himself a prisoner in Cappernairn Castle! He tried to pull open the door, threatened the highest pains and penalties of the law; in vain,—the treacherous, melancholy, felonious Loki only laughed at him.

"Let me out, sir!" cried the indignant W. S.; "this instant, I say! What do you mean by this absurd joke?"

"No joke, my dear sir—no joke at all,"

replied Cappernairn ; “ you’ll find my grandmother’s best gown in the wardrobe. You can put on that, and look at yourself’ in the glass for a little.”

He seemed to go away, but came back to the door to add,

“ And what’s more, Mr. James, unless you keep your thumb better on this than you were like to have done on the other, you’ll never get another name while you live but Cappernairn’s granny. You’ll keep a calm sough if you’re wise.”

It used to be said of a celebrated actor, that he had frequently, after performing, to be carried into the green-room quite exhausted. When the friend who should have dined with him stepped out of his place of concealment in the “ clients’

closet," he found Mr. Beal looking at himself in the glass (an old-fashioned mirror over the mantelpiece), with a face exhibiting such recent ravages of exertion as none but a young man wholly engrossed in his own affairs could have overlooked.

"Is he away?" said Weatherby; "I was beginning to think, he would never go. Once set him down, Rollockson's the most tiresome, tedious beggar to talk that ever God put breath into!"

"Yes, he's away," replied Jan, morosely. "Do you want any dinner? we have no time to lose."

"Do I want any dinner?" said Weatherby; "I should be inclined to say so, after the breakfast we had this morning!"

"Don't whinge, then," said the young

man's tutor *in loco*.\* And he called down to Madre to bring up the remains of dinner.

“ I am glad,” said Jan, gravely, “ to hear of your return of appetite. It's a good sign of your mother's safety. It all lies with her now.”

\* “ Don't whinge, then,” *i. e.* don't fret. The expression is usually addressed to children.



## CHAPTER IV.

SEQUEL OF MR. ROLLOCKSON'S ADVENTURE IN CAPPERNAIRN CASTLE—CULTS' HAT FOUND ON THE COAST OF SHAPINSHAY.

ROLLOCKSON himself tells the story of his incarceration and escape from Capper-nairn Castle with great glee. The house having never been tenanted since the death of Beal, is now a melancholy ruin, standing so nearly within the verge of high-water mark, that the tides of a few succeeding winters, in all probability, will wash it away.

He was not long left to his own unassisted conjectures as to the meaning of the movement; it seemed scarcely a minute in his crowded and furious state of mind, although in reality ten. From the window of his prison chamber, he saw Capper'nairn's lugger (having on board that gentleman and his client, Mr. Weatherby), manned with a stout crew, standing out of the bay.

“The daring, impudent scoundrel!” cried the captive W. S. “I would freely pay a hundred pounds out of my own pocket to give him chase. I see his game—I see it all—shoe the witnesses, and defy us to prove it; no evidence of my incarceration here—not a tittle—nobody saw me go in—or get out—ha! ha! ha!”

But still, in the midst of this excitement, the logical thread was not altogether snapped. Surmising that there was probably a guard in the outer room left to keep watch, he called aloud, offering any bribe within the limits of the hundred for his liberty. To these overtures, however, no answer was returned. All within and without the house was silent; nothing was to be heard save the weather-gust, which, with its more drearily prolonged cadence, and its fitful glug-glug at the casements, now gave intimation that the gale was decidedly on the decline.

In short, our learned and esteemed friend had as narrow an escape of going off into hysterics as ever man had: he laughed, he raved; then, frightened at the noise he made, was suddenly silent. And

then the voice *within* whispered, “That’s not the way to get out.”

“Is there absolutely no means of escaping?” said R. then, to himself; and catching up a chair, in the first impulse of his fury, he beat out one of the casements (they were all so choked up with sand and dust that not one of them would open) ere he recollected that he had neither rope nor other means of lowering himself down. The distance from the ground was not absolutely so great as to make the drop a feat uncontemplatable; but, unfortunately, on that side the castle there was a deep, green, stagnant ditch full of water.

Following the example of other heroes deprived by law of their liberty, he next set about a minute examination of the apartment. This, at length, too, proving

hopeless, the intense longing for liberty drew him to look up the tunnel of the chimney; it was roomy enough, but how to get down from the roof of the toppling old building? Frightful! and, afraid of being actually drawn in to attempt the ascent of the chimney, he hastily drew back. It was in this act of stepping back that his foot made acquaintance with a friendly rain-drop that had for long past years been at work; a part of the floor beneath the carpet, close by the hearth-stone, yielded softly under his foot. To lift the carpet, and drive the heel of his boot through the rotten boarding, was the work of an instant; a few minutes, in fact, sufficed to effect his escape. Dropping through the washing-house, anciently the brewhouse of the castle, Mr. Rollockson

might then have been seen outside of Cappernairn, flying over the heath in the direction of Kirkwal, at the very top of his speed.

On he fled, nor stopped until he had placed wind and water sheer between him and the villanous old mansion; then, having attained a sufficient distance to indulge, he threw himself down on the grass, and laughed until he was completely exhausted.

A peasant boy passing by, on his way home from the town, asked him whether he had been robbed? To the little chap, the tears and the "Oh dear!" of expiring laughter exactly resembled the moan of pain. "Have the Horners rubbit ye, sir?" asked the boy, referring to an encampment of mongrel gipsies who had

infested the neighbourhood for some time.

R. looked up, and seeing the boy's sympathetic face, would have tuned his pipes again had there been so much wind left in him; he had barely enough to say, extending his hand, "Why no, my little fellow—help me up and I'll give you sixpence. I have not exactly been robbed, but I have very nearly been made a *spoon* of by a sort of *Horner*!" He pulled out his purse, paid the promised lift-money, and put forward again, but had not got far when the exquisite felicity of his joke laid him prostrate in a second convulsion. Little Heatherherd the while looking after him, pressed the silver to the tip of his tongue with an awe-stricken smile: "Wae's me, sirs! and sic a braw gentleman to

look at! gyte—clean gyte. An he lies muckle langer there, the craws will be at him. I wonder gin his mither be livin.” Be sure the boy’s own mother heard the story when he got home.

Arrived in town, Mr. Rollockson found, just as he anticipated, despatches awaiting him from his clerk, Davie Athens, which ought to have come to hand the night before. Melethor had not yet returned from Shapinshay, but was expected every moment; and that there might be no delay when he did return, R. walked down to the Sailors’ Home public-house to see that the supplemental crew he had ordered for the *Brenda* were in readiness.

In the mean time let us just glance for a moment at the expedition to Shapinshay. All it came to was the finding of the



steward's hat. It was found by Melethor himself, just as he was on the point of turning to rejoin his boat's crew on the mainland side of the island, in the hope that their inquiries might have been attended with better success than his own. The gale having by that time (two in the afternoon) greatly subsided, he discovered the hat by its motion in the water just as the receding tide was about to leave it stranded on a solitary beach. The hat was a well-known ancient, and from the length of time the steward had worn it was not to be mistaken. It is needless to dwell upon the shock.

The Master was not nearly so eloquent on the finding of his steward's hat as Corporal Trim was in the famous hat scene in the kitchen, with Obadiah, and Susan-

nah, and the cook for his audience. In the present case, indeed, there was no audience, unless you count the pony he was riding, belonging to the lord of the manor: the animal having never quitted the spot where he dismounted on the edge of the downs, its drooping head just raised enough to avoid the prickling of the loose sand-drift (the grass, scanty and tasteless, was no temptation), while the wind blew the shaggy mane from the creature's eyes, it seemed to watch the picking up of the hat with an expression of mournful interest.

Carrying the hat up the beach, like a dripping pitcher, with the salt water in it, just as he had lifted it, all that the Master said was, "Alas, poor Will Cults!

Is this the end of all your saving and little——” He meant to have said “thieveries,” but it was an ungracious word to speak of the dead. Verbally that was all the moan he made for Cults ; and he was equally brief with the other, the companion of the voyage, and doubtless a partaker of the steward’s fate. But here the Master’s stoical pride seemed a little to give way. One witness, as we have said, of the sad journey’s end was the pony, a well-known and general favourite, Dysart by name, who, over the fetlocks in sand, stood patiently waiting his rider’s return. The rider, it was observed by the only other witnesses, appeared to have some difficulty or scruple about mounting, for, missing the stirrup twice, he buried his

hands and face in the creature's glossy mane, while no listening ear less acute than that which was stilled for ever could have caught the words, "Effie! Effie! What will Logan say!"

## CHAPTER V.

THE RETURN TO HALLOW—PARSON LOGAN SEES A SPECTRE  
IN THE OLD CASTLE OF HILLHURLIT.

HE sailed for Hallow immediately on his return from Shapinshay, without going up to the house, or having seen any of them, except for a few moments his brother William. He was accompanied only by Mr. Rollockson. But it pleased Heaven at the outset to set their minds so far at ease.

Standing across the bay, they met Captain Kith running in; and laying to to

hear the news, they had the satisfaction of seeing the captain wave his old bit of a pocket-handkerchief, while he called out at the same time, “A’ weel, a’ weel!” This, however, merely referred to Mrs. Deerness. If the captain had a fault, it was a disposition to babble in seasons of distress; for which reason chiefly he exchanged the hired crew for his own. A *douceur* to the men reconciled them to the loss of the voyage—whether there was any consideration of the sort given to the captain for the loss of his gossip I do not know. And by the shore-going party he sent a few lines to his sister:

“My DEAR H.,—I have just fallen in with Kith. Thank God, mamma got safely to Hallow, where she now is,

and so far all well; but I am sorry I cannot say so much for your friend, poor Effie. Birkenhead's boat has not been heard of. To-morrow, if there is no news, I wish you to call on poor Mrs. Cults and Adam B.'s wife. Don't cast them down, as, after all, there may still be a hope, but say what you think fitting in my name; and let William and Jerrold ascertain particularly when their boat left the harbour, and at what hour the wind changed, and bring or send me word to-morrow."

The captain's private report respecting Mrs. Deerness bore that when he last saw her, "which was at the hoose, she appeared to be well enough in body, but peerly in mind."

It now wanted a little of sundown—a

fine settled evening after the gale, with a light breeze; the sky, cleared of its mass of vapour, and clothed in purple and grey, showed Hesperus and the rising moon. As yet they had scarcely exchanged a word of conversation. This silence was distasteful to Rollockson, who knew of no cause now for the inveterate gloom, not to say ferocity, of his friend's looks, and he resolved to hazard some little talk himself, beginning with the benignant change of weather. Looking back on the town, he remarked how like a Sunday evening it was. "How magnificent," said he, "is the cathedral and its shadow in the water—and just look at Whitford Hill!" And then, as an effectual cure for his friend's dark mood, with a chuckle of infinite promise, R. whipped out his adventure of



Cappernairn Castle. “ You’ll hardly guess where I dined to-day !” But the other stopped him at the preface, telling him what fortune had sent them on the other side—the legacy of his steward’s old hat.

The wind was falling away.

“ Do you see any appearance of a breeze anywhere, men ?” he called out in answer to his friend’s opening budget. And then came the finding of the hat.

Rollockson had never, as he thought, seen a man so completely changed. He would talk of nothing but Cults — of his many excellent and admirable qualities — his faithfulness — his irreparable loss ; while any attempt at condolence was certain to be flung back at him, so unreasonable and tyrannical was his grief, or his temper, for it seemed doubtful which.

The lawyer's patience tired of this at last, and he had a great professional mind to try the effect of a counter-irritant, by calling his attention to the probable loss of Bletherentlet. At length he did so ; but neither had that any effect. "D— Bletherentlet, let it go!" "Umph!" thought R., "if that's the text you're to preach from, the clerk must duck and say Amen!"

So our learned friend was fain to beguile as much of the time as possible in walks forward, on pretence of looking out for a breeze, and there talking to the men, or studying the quiet beauty of the heavens. While indulging this latter and purer kind of reverie, though mixed up with much dinner-going and card-playing trash of his own, a tear at length stole into his eye to the memory of the faithful steward, whose

accounts last night had closed, and the present was auditing—or rather, that matter happily also was over.

At that moment, quitting the helm, with sorrowful and noiseless step comes forward Captain Kith, and touching him on the shoulder, says, “You’re wanted aft, Mr. Rollockson.”

It was only to ask what he meant by leaving him and sitting moping forward there. As R. took his seat silently beside him—for what could he say, perceiving that his temper was little or no better?—he lit his pipe and began smoking furiously, as if to shut out from his sight the azure and unutterable beauty above him. Talking from this cloudy tabernacle—grumbling and abusing R., and sneering at his condolences, as if they were the

trite measure of his capacity—he at length distinctly stated the balance at Cults' name in full by calling on that of Effie.

“You talk,” he said, “of my brother Raby—of the loss of Bletherentlet. Bah! Look you here, Rollockson. By Him that made heaven and earth, I would give every foot of land I possess at this moment to have that girl back again! You needn't look so sheepishly sympathetic neither; there were many objections to *that*—to say nothing of Effie's being much too good for me; but how I am to face the reverend young fellow, her brother, or what to say to *him*! I wish your law logic would put that process into something like shape for me, for my own ideas are all in hideous confusion. Rollockson, I tell you that, so far as I am personally concerned, the loss

to me is but a drop in the ocean, that has got her! She was clever, James—how clever, neither society nor the hearth of private man will ever know now; the purest, healthiest mind, the sweetest face that ever bade fair for long life, has given us the slip, and at the same time a metaphysical lift to existence, by being thus struck from the lesser sum and added to the greater, which as men we cannot but feel keenly and deeply. Already one feels in another world, so altered seems everything!”

But somehow this sort of fine talking never answers. He laid down his pipe, and his eyes filled with tears; then he walked to the vessel's side, and looked down into the water and said, “Effie! Effie!”

Thus, with every stitch of white sail set

to catch the expiring breeze, in the last light of twilight, silent, and with a sense of bereavement pervading the entire vessel, they floated on their way, at each undulation of the hushed deep now studded with countless reflections of stars, bowing perceptibly, though slowly, nearer and nearer to the goal. Sometimes a shimmering breeze would lend them a puff forward, and the reflected stars would disappear for a little, until the intervening breath of air spent, lo! there they were again in startling myriads visible to the eyes of the young men looking down over the vessel's side. But here we must leave them, the course of the story wafting us on before to a place on land but too often resembling a becalmed ship. I refer to

the parsonage generally, and here particularly to my friend Logan's in Peridale.

All day—the same day—Logan had spent in-doors engaged (in reading and in writing) on his great work, *An Abridgment of the Fathers*, but in the worst mood of mind for making progress, to wit, at once restless and lethargic; until he was startled by the song of Kith in the kitchen, and perceiving now the beauty of the approaching evening, he shut up his papers, and got his hat and cane and walked out.

“Whether,” said Logan, “to call on these unhappy Henderlands, or to seek out some obscurer and possibly greater scene of distress—that is the question.”

Logan's walk, as it happened, took the

opposite direction from Peri-Point. The truth is, he had been suffering lately ; and now, under the influence of a deep and solemn, but yet healing, disappointment (of which more anon), our parson's fancy getting astride the back of memory, the two were away together on a most delightful excursion, whilst his bodily steps were directed towards South Cape, behind which the sun was just setting.

“ Far from the present sombre scene the pair,  
Between them, lo ! our happy parson bear ;  
Not what he now is, less what he has been,  
Nor wiser much, but something wight between.”

His reverie was crossed by an old march dyke, and the parson looked down at his shoes. “ Ha ! ” said Logan, “ there is some superstition or tradition, I have heard, about this march, and the reason why the



lairds of Hallow were never permitted to pull it down. Stay ! what is this it is ?”

While my friend for himself is recalling and arranging the particulars after his own fashion, let me tell off hand

### *The Tradition of the March.*

Formerly there were two proprietors in Hallow Isle, Hallow and South Hallow, or Bletherentlet, and a tradition arose out of some not over creditable circumstances attending the union of the entire island under one laird. About a hundred and thirty or forty years ago, the ancestor of this present Laird Melethor, a rapacious man, it is like, bent on being sole lord of the manor, took advantage of his weaker neighbour and kinsman, and bit by bit, by fair means and foul, never ceased until he

had circumvented him out of the whole ; which procured for the former the name of Whilliwha (or deceiver), and for the latter that of Lugs, from his being so good a listener to his grasping neighbour's stories. In short, the one being weak and recipient, the other strong and administrative, the stronger kinsman fairly drank and talked the weaker out of his estate. The tradition, moreover, states, that while Whilliwha was in the act of telling his last story, Lugs, taking his long Dutch pipe from his mouth, described with the shank some mystical figure or inscription on the air, ejaculated, " Hegh, sirs !" and then sugbed away—that is, died in his chair.

At all events, Whilliwha having now got all to himself, set his people to pull down

the march between the two properties ; but when the workmen came next morning they found, much to their astonishment, that some one had been at work during the night, and rebuilt what they had pulled down. This was three times repeated ; always when they came back in the morning to their work the loose dry stone dyke was as entire as ever. The men, becoming frightened, refused to have anything more to do with it ; and this putting old Whiliwha in a towering passion, he resolved to lay in watch himself for the nocturnal intermeddler.

Accordingly, says the tradition, he did so, and repairing to the spot at the mirk hour of midnight, alone, he saw his late neighbour's ghost, or a figure exactly resembling the late Bletherentlet, busy at

his task of rebuilding. Whilliwha hem'd to attract the attention of the apparition, but the thing taking no notice of him, went on with its work as mechanically as if it had been working for a day's wage: Whilliwha then, between fright and passion, accosted it snappishly.

“Ye're a braw dry-stane dyker, neighbor!”

“I had need be, Whilliwha,” answered the shade of Lugs.

“Wha gied ye authority for this, if ane might speer?” again demanded the living laird.

“Ane,” replied the dead, “that wants the dyke to be keepit up for a purpose of his ain.”

“I ken *wha* you refer to brawly,” cries Whilliwha. “But the story that I took

the better of you is a leein idle clash. I defy Sathan himsel', an ye were ane o' his chosen can'les now, to say that I blew ye oot ! Ye were but a phantom at your living best—seldom ever gaed to a kirk, and evaporated of your ain accord ! Will you begone at my command ?”

“ No.”

“ Will you be gone if I fire at you ? Do you see that pistol ? and there's another in my other pouch.”

“ Fire at a shadow ! The property has ta'en his head ! You must be out of your judgment, Whilliwha !” said the laconic and much-enduring Lugs.

Out of his judgment or not, the incensed laird in possession fired, and his late neighbour laughed at him through the smoke—vernacularly, reek.

“ I’m sorry for you, Whilliwha,” said Lugs, or rather his apparition, “ but you’ll get it through the reek for this some day yet.”

A ruthless, able sort of man, the laird at this lost his temper altogether.

“ You meeserable, useless, d—d disembodied object that you are, could you have put to your hand in time as you seem to do now, the land might have been yours to this day !”

“ Very true, Whilliwha—very true ; folk man work some time, ye ken—here, or hereafter.”

Whilliwha, says the tradition, finding that he could make no impression on his late neighbour, began to be frightened in good earnest at the calm imperturbability

he displayed; so, by way of last resource, he thought to rout the apparition by throwing in a sneer at his notorious want of *savoir faire* when he was in the body. “Muckle,” said Whilliwha, “*your* wark will come to when all’s done!”

“Once I was your neighbour, sir,” for even Lugs’ ghost seemed to feel the taunt, “and now I’m but a ghaist.” Thus far the deceased answered with much posthumous dignity, but the force of resentment could no further go, could no further sustain one whose whole life in the body had been an example of easy, indolent good-nature; the apparition merely added, therefore, as it fell again to work, “The Powers abune are muckle offended wi’ us baith, Whilliwha; all *I* ken of the matter

is, that I am charged to keep up this march dyke between us, *for it will be needed yet.*”

This drove Whilliwha to his last argument; he wished to probe to what extent it was proposed to assume this unnatural power over him, for most monstrous and unnatural it seemed that the living laird was thus to be traversed by the dead. “Be-like,” said he, “were I to pull down the auld house next, you would pretend to rebuild that too?”

The shade of Lugs seemed to make a short pause at that proposition. It said: “As to the house, I canna say till I am tried. But fare ye weel, Whilliwha.” (All the versions concur in this conclusion of their singular interview.) “Oh, man, let this be a lesson to you in futur’; the estate



that you rived from me I had desteened into your family, at any rate, having no body children of my ain. Your second son was to have been my heir; see now what you have made by supplanting him. But, mark my last words, Whilliwha. As sure as the great house ower your head, and the narrow ower mine, the second son will come in yet, and the island will be split in twa again, though it may be generations after you and I have foregathered in the mools, and forgotten all our dealings and our quarrels. You didna think you were cheatin, maybe, but you were.”

Whilliwha, notwithstanding, kept his threat in regard to the old house, and had a part of it pulled down; for, said he, “where there’s no bield, there can be no habitation—ghaist or body, ane must have

a house ower their head." But Lugs showing no disposition to interpose in behalf of the dwelling-house, the ancient lord of the manor at length got tired of the feud, and the march dyke, together with the old castle of Hillhurlit, were left to Time's keeping or taking, standing as they are at this day.

Such was the popular tradition that gave rise in the family to the sobriquet of Lugs' Heir, as applied to the handsome, but foolish, do-nothing, dreaming Weatherby. When a "younger brother" shoots up prematurely, and runs to seed before his time, there are no acuter detectors of his aspiring weakness than the still younger plants; and thus, in their laughing more defined growth towards something themselves, they came to call Raby Lugs' Heir.

Give a dog a name, and hang him. To return to our parson.

There was, Logan understood, an old house or castle, answering to the description in the legend, somewhere in the direction of South Cape, but he had never seen it, that end of the island being uninhabited, with the exception of a few wind-battered huts along the shore. His walk, already of some extent, was beginning in his mind to lengthen; it was getting a little dusk; small columns of white mist were advancing up from the interior on his left, and the undulating wolds of which the country was composed seemed deepening and widening into more expanded and unknown recesses. In short, Logan began to suspect that between him and South Cape, whose purple top ap-

peared now to glow further off than ever, there must intervene a valley of considerable extent.

Coming to the wooden bridge over Drapness, at once the old castle of which he was in search was placed before him, situated on the land bar between Drapness Head and South Cape, looking westward to the sea, and eastward down the great Hurlit valley, which he had conjectured must be thereabout.

A noticeable feature in the locality was the wooden bridge just mentioned. This picturesque structure spanned the narrow inlet mentioned in a former chapter, under the name of Ventureness Voe, or the Dead Pool. It appeared to Logan to be very old.

Without essaying his courage to pass

over, being in no hurry, the parson preferred walking round the head of the inlet, and in a few minutes more he stood on the bar, or mound, in front of the old castle. It was cleft nearly in two, showing unmistakably the breach made in it by old Whilliwha.

The situation was peculiar: the bar, or mound, on which the ancient building stood, had the appearance of an artificial embankment, with its long slope seaward; on one hand rose the bluff shoulder of Drapness, on the other the more receding but higher summit of South Cape, the last point in the landscape still retaining the bright evening flush.

Contrasted with these, now that he stood close beside it, the castle itself had an appearance of smallness, almost of in-

significance. The grey old tower, three and a half stories high, half deciduous, and glimmering white in the deep purple glow, looked as if it had considerably settled down into the green sward of old pasture, whose antiquity, sacred from the plough-share, was attested by a certain affecting batch or pretty convocation of mushrooms starting up all around in the evening dew.

Logan gazed with that softened feeling so natural to us when contemplating the umquhile habitations of men. Without a single presentiment, or a moment's warning, all at once the blood at his heart collapsed, the hair on his head arose, his whole frame became rigid, and he stood as a dead man ; the cause of which seizure was this : in one of the glazed windows of

the tower he saw distinctly, looking out at him, the face of his patroness, Mrs. Deerness, and she, as he believed at that moment, in Kirkwal! The apparition (for what else was he to think?) seemed to regard him with a look of half sorrowful, half haughty severity, and then disappeared.

## CHAPTER VI.

LOGAN IS SENT FOR TO THE CASTLE.

I HAVE taken some little liberties with my friend Logan in the course of the story, but I must not indulge here in a ludicrous description of him flying over the wooden bridge of Drapness without pausing to ask whether it would carry him or not. The truth is, the reverend young fellow was shocked to the very core by so unexpected an experience as the sight of



an actual apparition. Metaphysics, mathematics, logic—the entire spectre-laying machinery was at a stand-still. At last, however, sad memory seemed to apply a sort of solution to the enigma.

It was this: Ever since his abrupt departure from town his mind had been incessantly haunted by this triform question: “Ought I to have applied to Mrs. Deerness? Does she know of it? Ought I to apply to her still?”

Apply, that is to say, for the hand of Miranda. On that sad day when my friend found it necessary to evacuate Kirkwal, he had (in a formal manner, disguising Heaven knows what flutter and sudden gust from Paradise) asked Miss Deerness to walk with him in the garden at Belyewane. It is hardly necessary to

say more on this painful subject: Harriet received the communication which was then made to her with a bright transcendant blush, that indicated not so much either refusal or consent as the unbounded amazement of so very young a girl (with, perhaps, just a tinge of horror to lace it) on being thus prematurely summoned into womanhood by a man of Morland's sacred profession. What could she say? With indistinct words (importing, however, rejection) the scared girl fled from him and took refuge in the house; while Logan himself, scarcely less horrified, stood at gaze in a shower-bath of cold perspiration. Does the Presbytery wonder, can they blame Morland, if at that moment he felt inclined to throw off his reverend prestige and dance on it! as one having the

greatest reason to say on this side of profane swearing, "Sacred rag, that I should have committed so capital a mistake!"

It was, in fact, a mistake, and clerically committed, too, from no want of forethought. The passage in our parson's career here under review, in so far as that sort of preparation can go, was as carefully conned over beforehand as any of his best sermons. In one word, the possibility of rejection never once occurred to him.

Now, my friend, as I have already said, like any other young fellow in the circumstances, beat his retreat at crack of doom. It was only when he got home and had calmed his mind to reflection by a few rounds in the beaten track of duty and a *résumé* of the whole affair and its unfortunate issue, that the real question arose,

and Nature uttered her great voice with the authority of consolation. Was it a permanent rejection he had sustained? Was it even a rejection at all? Every breeze that sighed past him on the heath said, "It could not be;" every glimpse of sun that restored to him the companionship of his shadow said, "It could not be;" and when that again was withdrawn, the tempest that drew the gloomy curtain of the clouds over his head, and drove every living thing in his path to cover, did its spiring gently by the poor solitary parson, and sent him home in the name of Miranda!

Always either planning the return or mourning the absence of Miranda. The conclusion he came to, therefore, was, that in opposition to a tough temperament not

apt to be imposed upon by nervous impressions, the present was really and truly a very strong case of ocular deception, vulgarly so called; revelation, he conceived, would be the proper term in this case. In other words, that it had pleased Heaven suddenly to reinstate him in his suit by a sight of Miranda's mother looking at him out of an old family castle that chance and his evening walk had thrown in his way. The face of the vision, it is true, wore a frown, but then it was more in sorrow than in anger, and obviously intended to upbraid him with his over precipitate retreat. And in this comfortable doctrine Logan determined to abide, and no more suffer despondency to come near his sturdy spirit.

It was now deep twilight. As he ap-

proached his own home, he descried a gentleman, a stranger (guided by a young peasant), who had apparently just been calling upon him. The stranger, who was a tall, elderly man, of genteel, at all events professional, appearance, on receiving a hint from his guide, who plucked him by the skirt, and whispered that that was the minister, made a full stop, and looked hard at Logan with an eye indicative of good cheer, but overclouded by some little present perplexity. He spoke as follows: "My name, sir, is Athens. I am manager and part partner in the firm of Brandibrand, Rollockson, and Baliol, Writers to the Signet, Edinburgh. I was referred to a meeting at your house with Mr. Rollockson, but the girl tells me he has not been there."

“Had you any appointment with Mr. Rollockson, sir?” inquired Logan.

“Yes, I was to have met him here this evening.”

“Will you turn back with me, sir, and wait a little ; perhaps Mr. Rollockson may call soon ?”

“I thank you, sir, but I must go back to that public-house at the harbour ; there’s an old man I saw there, and—and—in short, I have some misgivings there’s a hole in the business that brought me here. I wish you a good evening, sir.”

The stranger, evidently a slow man ordinarily, was so abrupt in his departure, that he was gone before Logan had time to think of making any further tender of his service or assistance. He walked into the house, musing on the little incident.

Logan had the parsonic trick of sometimes looking into the kitchen personally instead of ringing to order tea, just to see what that oddity Kith was about; and this evening he found her standing at vacant gaze, crying to herself, or something very like it.

He asked her sharply what was the matter. Kith broke into her old just as vacant laugh, and answered, "Nothing, minister;" but while she stirred up the fire and put on the kettle for tea, she inquired, as it were incidentally, "when Miss Effie—when the mistress—was coming home?"

"I fancy, Kith," says the parson, jocosely sarcastic, "that Miss Effie is enjoying herself much too well where she is to be in any hurry to return to you and me."

Some time after tea—he did not know



exactly how long, being engaged on his *Abridgment of the Fathers*—there came a knock to the door, and presently Kith appeared, ushering in a messenger with a letter. Being a good deal preoccupied, Logan did not at the moment perceive that the bearer was his friend Rob of the Bog. Desiring the man to take a seat, Logan, with the greatest astonishment, read as follows :

“ Hillhurlit Castle, Saturday Evening.

“ REV. AND DEAR SIR,—I have to request that, immediately on receipt of this, you will accompany the bearer, who will bring you here to one whom you will probably be surprised to find in circumstances so altered. It is my wish to consult you in reference to some changes that have

recently taken place of a pressing, and I may add of a very painful, character. You need have no distrust of the bearer of this; poor Rob Ingles has got the name of a 'do-nothing' and 'silly,' but he has been most useful and faithful to me in my distress, and perhaps the name of Robert Ingles may hereafter rank above some who think they have done and suffered more. Bring also, or send, Charlotte Kith, whose presence also is particularly necessary.

“Your afflicted and most humble servant,

“MARGARET DEERNESS.”

The parson having read this most unexpected missive, groaned inwardly, saying, “What strange calamity can have over-

taken our friend to drive her into this extraordinary exile? Verily, such a despatch as this, and brought by the hands of the common idiot, augurs mournfully."

Robert, or Rob Ingles, commonly called Rob of the Bog, was not exactly an idiot, nor did the parson use the term in that sense; he was half insane, but that, too, is a term often loosely applied. In Rob's case, it merely meant that, in the opinion of his aged mother and the simple neighbours, he was not sane enough to do any turn of work, unless it were the going a message now and then, or doing any little thing that happened to jump with his humour. In any of our busy manufacturing towns, the parish overseer would very soon have taught him the use both of his wits and his hands. Neither did Rob of

the Bog answer at all to the character of the village 'daft Jock,' who, if sometimes an irascible personage, is easily appeased; to Logan's knowledge, he was, when offended, a malevolent, dangerous fellow, steady, persevering, and cunning in the prosecution of his petty revenges; in general, where he chanced to be upon good terms, an advice-giver and intermeddler. His presumed defective sanity rested chiefly on his odd personal appearance—a thick felt of close-cropped yellow hair, a low forehead and wry face, a shambling, awkward body and legs, with the power of assuming, when occasion required, an exceedingly starched, conceited, and pharisaic air.

Now, it was not unknown to Rob, in his capacity of itinerant preacher, that this

same parson Morland had made a vow to put a stop to him as a nuisance in the diocese; most profound, therefore, was the scowl with which he eyed the pale, learned countenance reading the above letter. Finding, at the end of it, that the parson, instead of giving him an answer, had fallen into a reverie, Rob took the liberty of reminding him, in a snappish and disrespectful tone, "that his time was too precious to be dribbled out that gate."

"Ye're dreigh to draw the night, sir, I think," said the fellow, "like auld Doublebody's dirk at the battle o' the Scowp.\* Am I to tell the leddy you canna come,

\* There is a tradition of a battle having been fought in Hallow in the time of the invaders, between the clan Doublebody and a horde of the Pictish aborigines, who continued, for a long period after they were driven out, to make a stand in the caves and rocky fastnesses of the island of Craigery.

or you winna come? for atweesh and atwixt them, it's like her biddin's not to be done."

"Is that a way to speak to me, you idiot?" said Logan, indignant at the studied insolence of the boor.

Now the parson was short of stature, and Rob, though ill put together, was a tall, powerful fellow. His eyes glared on the minister, his right arm curled up by the elbow, the clenched fist showed the swelling veins.

"Do you dare, sir, to lift your hand to me?" cried Logan, and seizing the fellow by the throat, he gave him a good sound shake. Despite his lunatic and spiritual gifts, Rob quailed, like the presumptuous hypocrite he was, beneath the grasp of authority, and pulling on his hat (down

to the ears), he asked, in a whimpering voice, "If that was the answer he was to carry back from a servant of the Lord (and ablins by anither) to a lady who, over and forby being their mistress, was in great trib-ul-lation?"

"Hark you, my good fellow," said the parson, "I see the sooner you and I understand each other, the better. You must not attempt to practise that sort of jargon upon me, nor, in future, upon the ignorant people about either, for I will not permit it. One word more in your ear : I know your secret. You are no more insane than I am. Let me catch you at your tricks after this, and banishment and labour are your portion, as sure as your name is Rob Ingles, or Rob of the Bog, if you prefer the more imposing title. There, go ! Say

to Mrs. Deerness that I am——” “Coming” was the word, but signing to the messenger to wait a moment, he sat down at his desk and wrote a note, showing in this even greater courage, as the check of his eye upon the madman was removed; for mad Ingles was, when his ignorance and passions were roused. Luckily, the act of writing had the same restraining effect; Rob, who was but an indifferent scribe himself, in the restraint thus imposed upon his wrath, could only gaze with a sort of malignant admiration at the nimble pen flying over the paper.

“There!” said the parson. “Deliver that to Mrs. Deerness; and recollect what I said to you, or it will be the worse for you!”

He looked out, and saw Rob already



round the foot of the lake, bounding along in the moonlight in the direction of Hillhurlit Castle. "I must have my eyes about me," thought Logan, "or that scoundrel will do me an injury."

Accordingly, armed with the stoutest of his three walking-canes (in case of Rob springing upon him unawares), he set out for Hillhurlit, accompanied by Charlotte Kith, his maid, walking a few paces in his rear, and muttering to herself all the way, "Sic, sirs! What's this, now? I tell'd her what would come o' keepin't frae minister!"

And here we will leave my friend for a chapter or two, the story requiring some other matters to be taken up.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE "OLIVE" IN SANDYHAVEN ROADS—DAVIE ATHENS DESCRIBES AT LAST HIS CHIEF'S SIGNAL TO COME ON SHORE WITH THE WITNESSES.

CAPTAIN WILLIE JOHNSTON had some old rum on board, which the fine taste of Davie Athens had rendered classic during the late voyage in the north. Willie was poddering, as usual, about the deck at his work; a hint from the tall, stately Edinburgh clerk that it was Saturday at e'en, and time to drop work, was quite enough

to raise the bent, over-careful perhaps, but good old man.

Captain Willie obeyed by immediately serving out the grog. “As you observe, sir—*say when*: it is just a remarkably fine evening—an<sup>e</sup> would almost expect to hear the jow of a kirk bell from the land. Your good health, Mr. Davit!”

In this tranquil and unsuspecting hour was Davie Athens deprived of all the inward inspiration and probable external renown he had acquired by his heroic voyage in these northern seas. The twilight was just at its sweetest when he exclaimed, “Rollockson’s come, there’s his signal!” and the exclamation put an end to their vespers.

The signal referred to was a smoke rising from the point of the pier.

“There’s a lowin peat in the beacon, sure enough,” observed Willie Johnston; “they’ll have come the overland passage, by Corbysholm, you’ll find.” He called to his mate to make ready to pull Mr. Athens on shore; and Davie, shaking hands, and promising to see him again before he went south, embarked with his witnesses in the brig’s boat.

The inhabitants of Sandyhaven, such of them as happened to be about the doors in the evening, were rather surprised at the appearance of the late laird’s man of business, the well-known John Beal of Cappernairn, with a crew of half a dozen men at his heels, and accompanied by the present laird’s brother, Mr. Weatherby. It was Jan’s intention to have boarded the *Olive* direct, but being becalmed about a

mile off Hallow, he ran the lugger on shore at the nearest point, and so pushed forward on foot to Sandyhaven.

In those days to which I have just referred, Mr. Beal was a personage of first-rate importance with the inhabitants of the little township, and they would have greeted his reappearance among them with marks of friendly and respectful recognition; but Jan had no time to indulge in this kind of sentiment. Pushing past with an air of business preoccupation, he paused at length before a more congenial spirit. This was Jonathan, commonly called Pan Whittet, of the Capstan public-house—an old, pedantic rascal, who had gone the vole, been man-of-war's-man, Greenland whaler, salter, and finally smuggler, from a period when

smuggling was much more common in these islands than now.

Pan, who was taking his evening smoke at the door, saluted the ex-chancellor of Hallow with a peculiar flourish of his long-shanked pipe, and a grin still more indescribable.

“And how are things moving with Commodore Whittet?” said Mr. Beal, returning the salutation with his glove.

Whittet, an inveterate old tar, spat vehemently on the ground, by way of prelude, as he replied in that strangest of all the compounded dialects, the high nautical English, common to most seamen when they come to set up their staff on shore :

“Dull, Mr. Byle, oh, most devilish ! There’s no spirit in the niggers now-a-days, none. Step in, sir—step in ; though I’m

*almost* ashamed to see you. The on-lookers are incressin, Mr. Byle.”

“So I see,” said Jan; and walked into the house. “Let the men have some whisky in the tap-room, and bring us a gill of your Schiedam—I want to have a little talk with you;” an order which was promptly obeyed by the smuggling old landlord.

“Do you mean to tell me, Whittet, that there is absolutely nothing doing?”

“Nothing, Mr. Byle—that is, to speak of. There hasn’t been a canary in the cage since the year ’28, afore the great snow-strum. The trade, in fact, is done.”

“What do you mean by a canary in the cage?”

“Ah! you may well ax that—them, sir, was the days! The canary in the cage—

that was the signal, Mr. Byle. You see, sir, the beacon out by there on the quay, with the lantern, or open crownal of oak atop of it?"

"I remember now—I remember!" said Mr. Beal. But Whittet was not to be balked of his explanation.

"Well, sir—and Master Raby here knows it, for he has heard of the traditions of them days—when there was a boat to run, as soon as all was snug up the way at the house, we clapped the peat, or a live coal, as it might happen, in the beacon, don't you see, and that was called the canary in the cage."

"To whistle to them to come ashore, I suppose?"

"Just so, sir—you have, I see, the topography——"



“What brig is that lying off there?” inquired Jan.

This looked like coming to business, and Whittet sucked in his meagre brown chops as he replied:

“Well, Mr. Byle, to tell truth and shame a tale, I can’t make her out, sir, at all. She calls herself the *Olive*, of Stromness. But she shows no colours. I have been off and on to her a matter of nigh half a dozen times—but mum—they don’t interpret. There are two old plunks always on the watch, and one of them I take to be supercargo has a mighty dealing face—that loominous sort of look, sir—you understand. Altogether, upon the whole, my opinion is, though the ship is a ship of a tubbish build, and not a likely moonshine carrier, still and on, sir, she sits too

peepy in the water, if you observe, not to have some of the old stuff on board."

With a smile, and a smart, animated look different from his ordinary morose manner, Mr. Beal said :

" I'm of the same opinion too, Whittet. I think we must try her with the canary."

" He—hey ! What was that did you say, Mr. Byle ? Then you know something about her ?" cried the old smuggler, snatching up the tongs. " Is it to be the canary, did you say, sir ?"

Jan, who had relapsed into his brown study, just gave a nod—not the smallest at a keenly contested auction could have been smaller.

" Then, come along, birdie !" cried the landlord ; and seizing the red, flaming

peat firmly with the tongs, he ran out and clapped it in the beacon.

The experiment was made at a venture. It just struck the sinister humour of Beal, quick at catching hints, that Rollockson, a notorious provider against contingencies, might have named this old-established signal to his clerk as a means of communicating his arrival in the event of their taking the overland route. Beal was not a man to be disconcerted by the unexpected success of his own device, though he did, for a moment, look a little staggered on seeing the signal so immediately answered by the appearance of the brig's boat. "Whittet," he said, taking the landlord aside, "this is between you and me—it does not, perhaps, become me to

instruct your grey hairs in a transaction of this sort, but I'll tell you what to do as soon as these men come ashore." And having hastily given Whittet his instructions, he glided back into the house.

Old Pan stood on the pier, smoking the sequel of his evening pipe, and watching the inward progress of the brig's boat, which, pulled by two oars, came on, to use the landlord's pedantic, but expressive enough phrase, dimpling most beautifully to his very feet. In about five minutes the boat was alongside, and Davie Athens, mounting the steps (for the tide was at half ebb), stood on the pier at Sandyhaven. Davie looked a little blank at not finding his chief waiting for him as he expected, but in his place the suspicious figure of the

old smuggler Pan, in his red nightcap, smoking his long-shanked pipe.

“The top of the evening to you, sir,” says Whittet, saluting him with his inimitable flourish of the pipe. “Come ashore to see the island, I suppose? or if you would prefer a seat and a drop of something, I am Jonathan Whittet, the landlord of this here public-house, that has more”—for Whittet really believed it to be a *bonâ fide*, *i.e.* smuggling transaction—“more abaft accommodation attached to it in the shape of back binnacles, and such like, than any other public or house of the kind in these here islands.”

Athens was completely puzzled what to think of this address, or the brown, shark-visaged speaker. The novelty of the scene,

the quiet little village, with its two or three people about the doors, the tranquillity of the evening, so like a Sabbath night—all perplexed and bewildered faculties at no time remarkable for clear perception.

“I expected to have met a gentleman here,” at length said Davie, hesitatingly.

“Oh !” said Whittet, “you are the gentleman that the gentleman in the house is expecting. Just step this way, sir, *with your two friends.*”

And thus was Davie decoyed into the house. The two men secured, he himself was got out of the road by a further plausible story, to which the landlord’s daughter stood interlocutor.

“Girze,” said her respectable parent, addressing an elderly female very nearly

as skinny and old as himself, “where is the gentleman who was expecting this gentleman who has just arrived?”

The daughter, instructed what answer to make, replied :

“Father, your memory’s failing you. Don’t you recollect it was not the gentleman who was here, but a message from him to bid you fire the beacon, and to tell the gentleman, when he came on shore, that he was to go over to his friend at the manse, and to you, father, to take care of the men here in the mean time.”

“As you say, Girze,” added the old rascal of a father, “my memory is getting a little timmerish or so ; but I believe, sir, that was the way of it.”

And the still unsuspecting Davie Athens, provided with a guide, set out on his plea-

sant walk to the manse, where, finding nobody in the house but Kith, the servant-girl, misgivings, acuter than his corns at a change of weather, began to take the heroic lustre out of Davie. So much, indeed, was the impedimental shock too much for him, he could hardly, as the reader may remember, speak to the minister when he met him at the door, coming out.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE RETREAT INTO HILLHURLIT.

WEATHERBY, in the mean while, had stepped up to the Lodge, to make some inquiry about his mother. On his return, he found Mr. Beal looking for him in the street. Beal was laughing, and seemed in high spirits.

“ ‘ Will you take or give news ? ’ ” said Jan, quoting.

Weatherby, who was no reader, and did

not know the text, answered, "Yes, he had news to give;" and he mentioned the fact of his having just ascertained that his mother had taken up her residence at the old house of Hillhurlit.

"News for news," said Jan, "and both good. I have seen the Gemmels, and asked what the deuce they were doing here. Well, it seems the brig's crew (Heaven bless their frolic humour!) have possessed them with a strong suspicion that my friend Davie Athens is neither more nor less than an excise officer, and that the real end of the trip is to bring them over the coals for some old scores; so that nothing, you see, can be more natural than that the men should make their escape without our appearing in the matter at all. As for the trick I

played Rollockson, that must pass for my humour.”

“ Could you not risk their examination now ?”

“ Well, yes, I might, had it been anywhere else, but not here in Hallow—the associations might——” He broke off.

“ But this is a most fortunate circumstance, your mother taking up her residence in the old house—possession, as our proverb says, is nine-tenths of the law. The time is now clearly come to take our stand there, and I had better go with you, in case of any questions from Mrs. Deerness, or explanations required on her part.”

“ I suppose so,” said Weatherby. “ I suppose that’s their sail we see off Red-craigs ; they’ll be here in an hour.”

“Yes,” echoed Beal, “an hour; but how much—or how little—may be done in an hour! It is the *shore*” (shore, a figure from the props used in ship-building) “that keeps up the falling wall of a lifetime.”

They had to knock thrice at Hillhurlit before any notice was taken of the summons. At length the door was partially opened, and Rob Ingles, presenting his wry face sideways in the gap, demanded who they were, and what they wanted.

“What the deuce, Rob,” said Weatherby, “do you pretend not to know me?”

“Brawly do I ken ye, Mr. Raby,” answered Rob; “but an you were twice laird here, you can e’en gang back the unfilial gate you’ve come, and fill your belly with the Erastian husks and birl out the brewst you’ve brewed wi’ the lave o’ them. My

orders was strict to admit no one—no one.”

Weatherby put the boor aside. A stair of a single flight led up to the principal floor. It was now almost dark as they mounted the worn stone steps. The ascent smelt mouldy, and anything but a habitable air. The same of the first room into which they groped their way. It was unfurnished—empty as a skull, the windows out, the plaster dropping from the walls, and the general impression bordering on the ghastly, as they stood consulting for a minute or two in whispers, listening and looking out into the deep, uncertain twilight.

“I’ll wait here,” said Jan. “Go and see your mamma, but don’t keep me long. Why don’t you go?”

“Eh?” returned Weatherby, in a still more bated whisper. “I don’t know. I—upon my soul, I don’t feel so sure now—now that we’re in the house; it’s a horrible old ruin of a place.”

Beal, whose own nerves were proof to such impressions, was half afraid his client was going silly.

“Pshaw!” said Jan: “go and see your mother.”

“Upon my soul, I’m afraid.”

“Are you turning a coward, sir!”

“No, no, no, it’s not that,” said Weatherby; “but what if she should be—anything wrong with her?”

“Then it’s your duty to go and see,” replied Jan.

Weatherby, again: “I can’t say my courage is up to yours, either. Do you

forget the hint I told you I got from that girl Morland ?”

“ I told you there was nothing in it—I thought I had cured you of that.”

“ Yes, but it’s back upon me now,” said Weatherby.

Jan, finally and peremptorily : “ Don’t provoke me, Raby. Go this instant, sir, to your mother. Every moment’s precious.”

And so poor Weatherby had to summon up his courage and go. Jan, meanwhile, full of fate and fire, stood at one of the broken windows, with his watch in his hand, counting every moment of the interview.

“ If that big coward should give me the slip after all !” he muttered. “ But no, he dare not ; he knows that I have vowed it

on the desolation of my soul here, and its damnation hereafter, to do this deed upon a prejudiced country ! He knows he dare not fail me ; it's more than his character is worth."

In a small parlour, not quite so dismantled, and partially furnished, Weatherby found his mother, seated by the window, looking out on the sea. It is unnecessary to dwell at much length on the interview. She started at the sound of the accosting voice, but with no cry in return ; she looked at once offended and irresolute.

" Oh, mamma, what a fright you have given us all !"

" I do not see what else you had to expect, Raby."



She made a speech of some length on the incompatibility of their sentiments in regard to the most sacred of all subjects, and the necessity for such a separation as this, which they must have, or might have, long foreseen.

On this point, Weatherby stood up for himself. He at least had always taken her part against Gilchrist and the rest of them ; though he must frankly own he thought she felt the difference greater than it really was.

To which the mother : “ Yes, alas, my poor Raby, I needn’t, I am sure, have forgotten that ; and being the only one left me, thou wouldst teach me how small the difference is too, wouldst thou, my poor Raby ! ”

Weatherby felt a little hurt at this depreciatory view of the value of his adherence.

“I am well aware, mother, of my own deficiencies,” he said; “but if I cannot argue with the cleverness of Melethor, nor the loudness of Jerrold, nor hold my tongue like William, at least I have my own convictions. I should say it was at least something like the thing to feel that you are right, and how much you must have suffered before taking such a step. I say nothing of Grouse; poor little beggar, he’s too young yet to feel very much. But there’s a name you have not yet mentioned: dear mamma, think of Harriet! she’s quite broken-hearted.”

Now this was not a got up speech, but it was cleverly done, and that last touch

was a masterstroke ; it reached the mother's heart through all the husk of exaggerated and wounded feeling, broke like light through the terrible gloom of the last twelve hours, and Weatherby was not insensible to the grateful emotions of which he was the bearer.

But, poor fellow, he could not afford to lose sight of the main object of the visit. She heard his story without interruption, and with little alteration of countenance ; there was a thoughtful flush throughout. When he had done, she said :

“ This is a singular story of yours, my dear Raby, and seasonable, if true. Ask Mr. Beal to have the goodness to step this way. I understood Gilbert Gruther to say that the title was a heartless and vulgar hoax.”

Her recent experience of friends in high places had disposed Mrs. Deerness to make great allowance for those less eminently endowed in respect of character and social position. She received Mr. Beal with a grave, formal courtesy, approaching almost to kindness ; and Jan, on his part, was no less courteous—his natural manner, indeed, when his passions were not irritated.

“Take a chair, sir,” said the Lady of Hallow. “This is an unlooked-for meeting, Mr. Beal, and in, perhaps, an unlooked-for place. What is this singular history, sir, of which I have just been hearing the preface from Raby ?”

In his best narrative style, concise, but omitting nothing essential, John Beal went through the history of the Bletherentlet destination with the unpretending

unction of a man telling the truth. She certainly expressed the kind of incredulity for which Jan was prepared. It was very strange, she remarked, that Mr. Deerness should have told her nothing of this. “I never knew him to have a secret from me in his life.”

Beal adroitly hinted that, perhaps, for that very reason, Mr. Deerness might wish to keep the thing secret even from her, in order to avert discussions which could have no effect in altering a destination in making which he appeared to be constrained by powerful, though unexplained, motives. And Mrs. Deerness answered, with a sigh, “I know — there were motives — of that part of it I am aware.”

And, after a little more conversation on the subject, Jan took his leave and re-

turned to the Haven, to watch over events there.

Meanwhile, Weatherby's glance examined a little more in detail the furniture and other matters pertaining to their common asylum, as it may now be considered. The room was small, and there was no carpet, but the wood floor was in good repair; the hearthstone newly whitened and a good fire on; the furniture old fashioned, with a few supplemental articles from Hallow; a Dutch clock over the chimney-piece had long done duty in the servants' hall; a chest of drawers and a black mahogany round table that had been their great-grandmother's, were from the schoolroom; but the chairs, the dining-table, the faded sofa, glimmering white in the twilight,

were all just as they had come down from the days of his great-grand-aunt Hilda.

The tenant of this cell was neither dull nor sparing of conversation; on the contrary, she had much to say respecting the new world in prospect. Ringing a small hand-bell, she summoned her major-domo, Rob.

“Robert, tell Stronza to get us a cup of tea.”

And in due time Stronza, an old woman, her only female domestic, placed on the table the evening meal.

She felt, she said, that now she might anticipate happier days than ever she had expected to see again—the worst was over and past—they were now emphatically at home; humbler it might be than the old home, but a measure of peace and security

was preferable to the burden and pomp of overtasked affections and the seeming brilliant lot with the worm at its core.

Soothing talk it was, yet, withal, perplexing to the poor new laird. As if to cherish his hopes in a situation where there was so much else that looked dire and chimerical, he asked for cup after cup of tea with even senile indifference to the capacity of the teapot, and with almost childish clinging to these outward and visible symbols. He asked his mother, too, to repeat to him the old tradition concerning the coming in again of Hillhurlit; and Mrs. Deerness, being deeply versed in that great wrong done by their ancestor to the weaker branch, was about to comply, when the narrative was interrupted by a knocking at the outer door.



“There they’re ! the false accusers are upon us, mother !” cried Weatherby : “the hour’s come. Now or never to hold our own !”

These exclamations had a singular effect on the mind of Mrs. Deerness. They called up visions of worldly splendour and state in conjunction with her handsome and fashionable Weatherby—once indeed, and until very recently, the very glass of fashion—visions that were rather sadly at variance, poor woman, with the ascetic character she had hitherto ascribed to the new world in prospect. “Raby,” she said, with a proud comprehensive look that went to the foolish fellow’s heart, “this is a poor, suspicious-looking place to receive them in, but you will find what it is to have put your trust in a mother.”

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE PURSUERS.

PERSONS a little crazy, or insane, are often cunning to a proverb. This admission of Weatherby was, in the estimation of the major-domo, a mere backsliding and falling away, the prologue of a return to the world and its ways, and, by consequence, to his expulsion from office. Rob accordingly was in the act of addressing a fruitless exhortation to his fellow-servant

Stronza on the instability of woman's mind and the uncertainty of place, as of all sublunary things, when this intimation of a fresh arrival drove him to frenzy.

“Haud the tongue o’ thee for a bletherel, Rob Ingles,” said Stronza; “dinna you hear there’s somebody at the door?”

Up from the den, or vault, that served them as kitchen, rushed the infuriated major-domo. But far from opposing the entrance of these second visitors, he would have ushered them up-stairs with clamorous alacrity.

“Step in by, sirs—step in by. I was just saying to Stronza there wad be mair o’ ’s ere lang: up-stairs wi’ you, swith! It wants a while o’ the ghaist hour yet, but we’ll be a braw gathering belyve! Wow!” added Rob, holding the lamp over his

head to take a more accurate survey of the intruders, "wha wad have thought to see you here, Maister Melethor? And that's Rollockson wi' you!"

This extreme insolence (of office) was new to him, but the Master took no notice of it. As they walked up-stairs, he whispered his friend, "This does not look well, James—that's mad Rob Ingles."

Entering the parlour, he stopped short on the threshold, with a strong and overpowering feeling of surprise, not at finding Weatherby there, for that he had reason to expect, but at finding his mother the centre of such a domestic picture—the tea-things were still on the table—and looking in all, save the set and altered face, perfectly well. Mrs. Deerness was the first to speak.

“How do you do, sir?” she said, with petrifying civility to Rollockson; and the Writer to the Signet, muttering [an internal “God bless me!”] found himself a chair at some distance from the group. Melethor took a chair nearer, and made a third at the table.

Above feigning any emotion but such as he really felt, he resolved to adopt a tone of calm, uncompromising remonstrance.

“Why, mother,” said he, “what is the meaning of all this? The offence must have been greater than we yet know, that could carry you off so suddenly without warning or notice. I might wonder at the strangeness of the place I find you in, were it not for this stranger reception.”

“The reception is of your own making,

Melethor," she replied ; " as you lost me you find me."

" *My* making ! in what respect ? There is something in all this I really don't understand. Let us come to an understanding. Have I in any way offended or failed in my duty ?"

" Not according to your notions of duty, perhaps," answered the mother, dryly.

" And is it to the exquisite filial piety of my brother Raby here that I must turn to ask for an explanation of my shortcomings ?"

" Your brother Raby will oblige me by taking no notice of the sneer. There is no quarrel in the matter, Melethor : compose yourself. You, if any of them, ought to have foreseen this. Our views, our whole thoughts and feelings, in reference

to a question which *I* think of more importance than all other earthly considerations put together, are so diametrically opposed, it was much better that we should part at once."

"This is the wildest fanaticism that ever was heard of! You cannot blame me," said the plain-spoken Master, "with having ever dictated to you in reference to this—this subject; nay, I have winked at many things."

"Have you indeed!"

"I have," said he, "and could name a few."

"Let us hear them."

"That is not the question now."

"To avowedly hold different opinions," said [Mrs. Deerness, "and to allow their influence to spread, in opposition to a

mother's wishes and a mother's prayers at the Throne of Grace, comes to much the same thing."

"Not so ! You touch the point now. I will speak to you in your own language, mother. To bear with these differences of religious opinion which so vex and annoy you, is as properly a part of the Christian scheme as any other trial of the faith."

"Ay," said the lady, "if all were upon one footing. But loose doctrine and any laxity of creed is a trial of the faith that sits very lightly upon some."

"James ! I am afraid you will have to assist me here," said the Master, turning with a smile to his amazed, perplexed, and indeed almost petrified friend.

"Go on—go on—you are doing very



well," said Mr. Rollockson, declining to interfere.

"Nay, I merely wished you to ask mamma whether she thinks it right or reasonable to be angry because nature has created so many different minds—so variously featured, I mean—that nothing external to the mind, not even truth itself, can be precisely the same thing to any two."

But Mrs. Deerness was much more serious in the position she had taken up than he had begun to imagine. She put a stop to this style of argument with some warmth.

"I will not sit and listen to such language! Do you mean to tell me, or would you try to persuade me, that the mind sees

truth independently of truth—meaning by truth the revealed word of God?”

“Certainly, were the mind not independent, how could it ever become a recipient?” But his conscience reproached him for using logic to a mother. In some cases (though it may sound paradoxical to say so), to talk sense is practically to talk nonsense. What follows is more to the purpose. “I know how deeply you are interested in this question, how keenly you feel that you are right, how much you suffer from this rooted idea that one view only can be right; but surely, my dear mother, this is too limited a view to take either of the Creator or His creatures. I am aware of the method of getting over that difficulty by admitting as many to salvation as you think are *not too far*

*wrong* ; it would be easy to show the logical absurdity of that arrangement, but that again, I suppose, would be construed into a direct attack ; so, to my purpose in coming here. I come to remind you that the law of civil society allows no such extreme marks of disapprobation on account of religious differences of opinion ; and, however right you may think it, you cannot do a foolish thing, and persist in it, without being unhappy. I would entreat you, for your own sake, mother—for all our sakes—to have a higher opinion of your fellow-creatures in reference to this question. But if you cannot—if you cannot have a higher opinion of the general destiny, I think I can put you in the way of an humbler and a better hope of so perishable a race. Since you left us last night,

one who bade fair to have stayed and taken share, has been called suddenly away : last night Effie Morland, and along with her William Cults and Adam Birkenhead and his crew, in a devoted attempt to cover your retreat, were lost ; they left Kirkwal harbour not half an hour behind you, and Effie and every soul of them were lost."

It was no intended part of his argument to have afflicted his mother with this calamitous intelligence, but her obvious determination to maintain her position of only sufferer in a case of so much other outlying misery, drove him to it. It was just in effect saying to her : " Mother, have done with this arrogant and monstrous delusion ; all these, not one of whom believed exactly as you do (Cults leaned to

the Gilchristic heresy), are at this moment just so many witnesses before God against you.”

The news fell upon her with terrible effect. A low, convulsive moan for many minutes would not be shaped into words; but, taking articulate form at length, the word-tempest burst upon them, until she wept, lamented, and raved with all the invective of the most utter and despotic grief; weeping for Effie as though she had been a child of her own; raving at the loss of the others, as so many superfluous and uncalled for additions.

Her mind, it was evident, would return to its morbid stronghold: the rock had been smitten, but not by the wand of a prophet. What in his appeal he had hoped most from—this very circumstance of six

lives lost in the darkness of night through her hasty and ill-omened excursion—only confirmed her in the belief that it was Heaven's will to sever her from society and her kind. She had long, she said, ceased to be happy in society, and the remainder of life spent in seclusion, and penitence, and sorrow—if, indeed, such horrors were to be survived—was the least atonement she could make.

Vexed and distressed, yet resolved not to yield an inch, Melethor said : “ A better atonement, mother, would be to return to that society you have outraged.”

“ With the guilt of homicide upon my head!” cried the unhappy woman. “ Never ! never !”

Had we but time to quote Bland here on the conduct of the laird of the bar-

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barous name ! But we have not time. Right or wrong in his judgment, he felt that he must be cruel to be kind—"to speak daggers though he used none."

"Mother," he said, "I find I must speak yet more plainly. I must ask you seriously to reflect what spirit you are of. These deaths in your track neither constitute, in fact nor by implication, the guilt of homicide. They are to be sorrowed for, but not by a process of slow suicide. Remorse itself is no excuse for falsehood. You do not find it written, "Whoso accuseth himself falsely for my sake :'' it is this reckless habit of exaggeration that has poisoned your happiness for years. No one questions your being in Christ as a body ; it is yourselves who raise the question, when you cry to shut so

many others out. Let me beseech you, mother, not to be deceived in this matter. God is not mocked : the fluctuating subtleties of eighteen hundred years of Churchmen have not settled the question—have not subsided into this exclusive right of asylum which you claim. Try to have more of Christ's spirit. The short statement that he went about doing good is better doctrine than all that Calvin ever taught ; the pardon written on the floor of the temple, a better example than burning a whole batch of heretics. Remember who says, ' Judge not, that ye be not judged.' This non-intrusion question, like so many others connected with the subject of religion, is most right and respectable, kept in its proper place ; men's religious liberties are as sacred as any



possessions they have ; but inflamed until all healthy action becomes impossible—reduced to a religious squabble—the result is not religion, but a religious phenomenon (or something very like it) of the means swallowing the end ! I surely don't need to remind you that most of these things about which there is now so much strife and contention were wholly unknown to the old Christianity of Christ and his Apostles. But had this quarrel been even better grounded than it is, there are still obligations you owe to your family and to society which nothing can cancel. I have nothing more to say."

"It is well," she answered, with a superb smile. "All that, my dear Melethor, we have heard over and over and over again. It is the established homily

that you easy-going, gentlemanly men of the world have long preached against evangelical Christianity.”

To this he rejoined: “What is evangelical Christianity? At present I suppose it means—that you refuse to answer. I ask you once more whether it is your intention to persist in this absurd quarrel, and to break with your family and your friends?”

“It is no absurd quarrel, sir,” she replied, somewhat angrily; “neither is it of my making or seeking. Such of my friends as choose to remember me I shall always be glad to see here; and for my family, may God forgive you the thought if you suppose it is my intention to put an end to all intercourse and relationship.

Your brother here and myself will always be glad to see any of you, and we hope to visit you in return."

"Now, by my word, Rollockson," cried the Master, turning to his friend, "I could almost laugh in sheer vexation. What, Raby! are you evangelical too?"

"Not so much of that, perhaps, brother Melethor," says Raby. "I know my failings, but I am proud to have a roof to offer my mother; and since I have come in to the old castle here, and the bit of land——"

"In short," said Mrs. Deerness, "your brother is now proprietor here, by a disposition of your late father, which you may see on applying to his agent, Mr. John Beal."

“Ay!” said Melethor; “sits the wind in that quarter? You hear, Rollockson! They have actually been fool enough to let the cat out of the bag with their own hands. I am sorry for you, mother—I would willingly have spared you this stroke, but it cannot be helped now. May it be a lesson to you! This pretended disposition, or title, said to have been left by my father, is neither more nor less than a forgery of Beal’s, and my evangelical brother here knows it!”

“It’s a lie, and you are a liar to say so! I know nothing of the sort!” cried Weatherby, stoutly.

“Tut, man, we are private,” continued his brother. “Be wise, and this need go no further. It rests with yourself. I say, if you are wise, you will spare yourself, me,

and, above all, our mother, the pain of any further disclosure.”

“Not me, not me!” cried the mother. “But—oh, Melethor—if—if what you said just now be true—spare *him*!”

Melethor: “I have already said that rests with himself. I will ask him a question. What, if not the fear of discovery, put him and his agent to the trouble they were at about the witnesses—the very men whose evidence was to set him up had the title been genuine?”

“That was Beal’s doing, not mine,” answered Weatherby. “I don’t know what his reasons were for interfering with your arrangements. It’s very possible that he may have wished to prevent your tampering with the men.

That he questioned your right to bring them secretly over here. . That he looked upon a secret and professionally conducted examination of witnesses by an interested side as most suspicious. That he wished to see fair play on both sides. And that he may have gone to fetch the men just now. I don't know," concluded Weatherby ; "but I should consider something of the sort as both possible and probable."\*

A high state of excitement sometimes bears light words—a furious tone almost approaching to jest. Thus spoke the Heir

\* I had intended putting in a note here at some length exculpatory of Weatherby. It may be enough, however, for the present to say that his agent Beal had all along kept him very much in the dark, both as regarded the origin of the title, and his intentions in the conduct, time, and mode of producing it. Also that Weatherby believed it to be perfectly genuine in all but one small formality.

of Lugs; and thus answered the descendant of Whilliwha, ironically :

“ A long speech for you, my dear Raby. But the sneer at the integrity of *our* purpose will hardly serve *yours*. You had best drop it in time: it is only an additional circumstance of suspicion to the trail you are leaving behind you. Rascal as the man is in whose hands you are, he knows me, and he knows Mr. Rollockson here, better than that. He is a clear-headed, clear-hearted, disappointed, bad man, and knows too well where to look for foul play: he could not suspect us, man, were he to try! Are you satisfied, or must you have stronger proof?”

“ If you please,” answered Weatherby. But his voice was beginning to have an odd sound.

Effie's letter to the Master, marked "Private," was then produced here and read.

"This letter, which I found lying for me on the table last night, is from Effie Morland. She says :

" 'DEAR SIR,—There is a kind of secret in my possession (though I hardly know if I am right in calling it by that name, since it may turn out to be nothing) which I have wished much and often were in other keeping than mine ; and I had frequent thoughts of telling it either to yourself or to Mrs. Deerness, but I never could clearly see that I would be right in doing so, seeing that, as already said, I might cause alarm and distress about nothing. In present circumstances, and my own



future being uncertain, I can no longer hesitate. Should any crisis hereafter arise relating to your father's succession, when I may, perhaps, not be at hand if called upon, you will then please to consider yourself at liberty to open the enclosed paper. I am, dear Sir, &c. &c.,

“ ‘E. MORLAND.’

“ In compliance with the wishes of the deceased writer, I have forborne to open the enclosure, which is now produced. Observe, Raby—observe, mother—I know no more than either of you what this paper contains. It may, as the writer states, be nothing—or it may be something; you, sir, who should best know what that something *may* be, must now make your election.”

“Raby!” cried the mother, “do you hesitate? Then, let me not be killed by the hands of a son! In God’s great name (oh, he will pardon me for so using it!), let the paper and the secret it contains, whatever it is, be destroyed together!”

M. was about to commit it to the flames, when the verdict of solemn silence was recalled by a loud laugh that made all start. At first they imagined it had been Rob Ingles listening behind the door, but it turned out to be from Weatherby himself.

“Stop!” he exclaimed, in tones the most extraordinary—a sort of haughty, flippant screech—“I forbid that paper to be burned! Open that paper! Let us see what’s in it! I knew Miss Effie Morland pretty well, and can guess the legacy she

has left me, I fancy. Ho ! ho ! ho !—a little paltry spite !”

The Master looked to his mother. Her eyes, poor woman, were now dim with other tears. She nodded, and M., formally handing the paper to his friend and man of business, Mr. Rollockson, that gentleman broke the seal and read :

“ ‘ *Send for Charlotte Kith. She knows all. Ask her what she saw the day I sent her to cover up the furniture.* ’ ”

## CHAPTER X.

THE PARSON ARRIVES WITH HIS MAID CHARLOTTE KITH.

IT was a clear moonlight night they got for their walk ; so the parson kept a wary eye about him, and a firm grip of his cane in case of ambush, Rob being capable, he believed, of taking any villanous advantage.

On the high, open common called the Brodds o' Kirk (corruption, as Logan conjectured, for Roods) there was nothing to apprehend ; but passing the Hurlit boundary, when he found himself chin deep in

one of those scooped and waving drifts that mark the commencement of the descent into the great Hurlit valley, he judged it advisable, for the sake of mutual encouragement and protection, to call on his rear-guard, Charlotte, to close up behind. Scarcely had he done so, when, with uplifted cane, the parson paused suddenly on his defence.

It turned out, however, that the figure in the path before him was going the same way; and on considering it attentively, its slow and stooping gait, he recognised his friend and elder, old Mr. Henderland, of Peri-Point. In a moment Logan was up with him.

“ You are late and far abroad to-night, Mr. Henderland,” said Logan.

“ Rather, sir,” replied the concise James.

“It’s baith a far gate and a sorrowful gate for me to be abroad in; and if I’m not mista’en, it’s the gate you are going yourself. I wish I could think it was to do your office upon ane that has been a sore freend to me and mine.”

“I am going to visit Mrs. Deerness,” said Logan, “at present residing in the old house of Hillhurlit.”

“The same,” said James Henderland. “Ken ye, sir, if the lad Raby be with her?”

“He may be, but I do not know. May I ask why you inquire?”

And James told his story—that of a father going to prefer a claim for a lost child’s happiness in a quarter where it was doubtful whether he would succeed.

“Alas ! and is it so ?” said the minister.  
“I am grieved to the heart, my dear friend. I sincerely sympathise with you. I had hoped it might not have been so bad as that.—Mr. Henderland,” continued Logan, after a pause, “you will not, I think, suspect me of preferring any request lightly ; but may I ask you to postpone this visit, if not until to-morrow, at least until I shall have seen Mrs. Deerness ?”

James said he could wait below in the hall.

“The hall, my dear sir ! You forget that this is not Hallow we are going to. In an old dismantled ruin, whose walls barely afford protection from the blast, it is not likely there will be much spare accommodation. But the night is fine, and

would you walk about for a little—I much fear, poor lady, she is in no state to bear any addition to the burden that has brought her hither.”

“ We have all our burdens,” said James Henderland, a little peevishly, “ and I cannot say that I see, sir, why I and mine should be postponed to her and hers. I know it has long been a belief in these islands that sune or late this Hallow is to be a distracted family, and, for aught I ken, the time may be come. But God knows!” added the old man, passionately. “ I wish they were as clear of *my* burden as I am of *theirs* !”

“ But, my dear sir—my dear friend—consider——”

“ Why should I stop to consider ? I’m an old failed man,” said James. “ Do *you*



consider, sir. I say again, I'm a failed old man, in the last passion of my auld age; but did the present journey concern mysel' merely, I could lay my head down on the turf, and never stir a foot further, but try to sink to my rest in the belief that this disgraceful down-come was all a dream."

It was a hard case—too hard for even Logan to suggest anything.

"But it's no dream," added James; "or, if it *was*, we have had a waking!"

"I much fear 'tis a dreamer's errand you are going, however, my unhappy old friend," thought the parson; and something of the sort he hinted.

"And why should it be a hunt-the-gowk?" asked James, hotly; "though I grant the lad Raby is in some respects little better than a gowk. We're as gude as them.

I'm not awn them a penny of rent. And this Laird Melethor is a just man, that will see justice done between me and the seducer, though it be his own brother."

But the apparent spurt of energy was spent. Slower and slower walked the feeble, broken old man, as with the great valley, now open and at full, underlying them on their left, they made the slanting descent towards the castle. By-and-by he put a question :

" Did I understand you to say, sir, that Mrs. Deerness had sent for you ?"

Logan said : " Yes. She speaks of some great change, or grief, in the family."

James, who appeared to take new hope here, suddenly raised his stooping figure : " Lay *this* to *that*, minister, may it not be the same !"

But Morland was the last man in the

world to encourage delusive hopes. “In part it may,” he replied. “I should not be surprised to find it a part of the affliction which would appear to have overtaken our friend.”

“Oh, sir, sir!” said James, again giving way to feelings of petulance, “did you know what a heavy heartful it is to me, you would not have said a part, but the whole! But I ask your pardon, minister—excuse my fractious temper—I was thinking of the puir tawpies at hame; in-field or out-field, at hame or awa, ever since this came upon us, I scarcely ken how to conduct mysel’! You were speaking, I think you said a little syne, that you should see Mrs. Deerness first: I’m sure I’m agreeable to anything. Let it be sae if you think sae: I can wait about here a little.”

“But, Mr. Henderland,” said Logan, “I

am averse to leave you thus ; I trust, sir, you see the propriety of this arrangement.”

James pressed his hand, and made a sign to him to go.

Rob was humming himself a chapter over the kitchen fire ; when this third knock came to the castle door, the major-domo read on with louder hum.

“ Art deaf, Robert Ingles ? ” said his peevish fellow drudge, Stronza ; “ thou canst be gleg enough in the hearing when it comes up thy ain back : there be mair folk at the door.”

“ It’s that pe-oy of a minister ; I’m no that minded to gang near him,” answered Rob, superciliously, still reading on.

“ Ah, this comes o’ my rheumat-granes” (complaining of her rheumatism), “ thou thrawart tyke, thou ! ” said Stronza ; “ but

thou canst exercise thy eyne at the peat a wee." And snatching the oil-lamp from Rob, the old woman hobbled up-stairs to open the door to the minister.

Mrs. Deerness flushed a good deal at sight of her reverend young friend. Still there was something of the old smile as she shook hands with him, and the old manner, though a little constrained and formal. "Come away, Mr. Morland; I am glad to see you, sir—take a chair—though I dare say you will be rather surprised to see me here."

Logan, in a sparing and well-turned reply to these courtesies, said what he thought was fitting in the case. The Master and he shook hands in silence.

Placing a chair for Kith, Mr. Deerness then said: "Sit down, Charlotte. I have

a letter this morning from your mistress. She tells me that you know something which it concerns us all here to know—something that you told to her at the time it occurred—that took place in Hallow House about a week after we left, and of which you were a concealed witness. You had gone up, your mistress says (here he referred to Effie's memorandum), to put away the furniture. You cannot have forgotten the circumstance. Speak out, my girl."

It was pretty evident that Kith had not forgotten the circumstance, but so extreme was the bewildered girl's agitation, it seemed very doubtful whether they should be able to make anything of her. Her sleepy eye rolled wildly from one to another of her interrogators; she swayed

herself in her chair, shivering and plucking nervously with her fingers. Her master took notice that these symptoms were most violent when her eye rested on Mrs. Deerness.

“Charlotte,” said the minister, “endeavour to recollect——”

Mrs. Deerness interrupted him :

“Do you know anything of this, Mr. Morland? Did *you* hear anything of this alleged communication?”

“Not a word, not a whisper,” answered the parson.

“I thought as much!” said the lady, a smile passing over her fearfully disturbed countenance. “Is not this Kith’s daughter that was brought up at the house—that they called *Gumpus*, *Compos*, and I know not what other names indicative of——”

She stopped, and said, good-humouredly, to the girl herself, “You recollect that, Charlotte?”

Kith gave a bend in the affirmative.

“You may go on with this examination if you choose, gentlemen,” said Mrs. Deer-ness; “but I believe you will find it sad stuff. On the occasion referred to, she saw, or thought she saw, something that frightened her—her manner indicates so much, as we all see; but the girl was a notorious dreamer all her days.”

Here followed a short, embarrassed pause.

“What do you say?” asked the Writer to the Signet of his client.

His client told him to proceed.

It was no more than the lawyer expected. Rollockson, a quick, observant



man, saw that the hope upon which poor Mrs. Deerness was now building was quite delusive. James knew something about witnesses, and how to manage them too. In his secret soul he suspected something like the real truth—the real cause of the girl Kith's agitation—and he would gladly the task now imposed upon him had fallen into other hands than his; but as acting trustee he had no alternative.

His first professional shaft was shot at the parson. “Sit down, Mr. Morland. We must begin by fencing the witness. Look at me, Charlotte. You know who I am? (Kith nodded.) Now, Charlotte, you heard what Mr. Deerness said to you just now, and you cannot but know what it is that he requires of you. Just tell us your story in your own way—take cou-

rage—perhaps it is not so bad as you think. (Kith shook her head.) You are not called upon to give your suspicions—observe that, Charlotte—because, after all, your suspicions may be unfounded—may not come true, you know, Charlotte. (The girl's eye lightened.) All that we want is a plain, straightforward statement of what you saw. Just tell us, as near as you can, what you told your mistress when you got home.”

This fencing of the witness had its effect. Mr. Rollockson did not require to say much more: and once begun, Kith could tell her story very well, as, like many uneducated persons of her class, she possessed the story-telling faculty in a remarkable degree. I shall give the substance, and as nearly as possible in the

girl's own words; to give it entirely *literatim* would be of no use to the general reader without a glossary.

## CHARLOTTE KITH'S NARRATIVE.

Charlotte began by stating that her dusting and covering-up work went on uninterrupted during the greater part of the day. But, about three o'clock, being in the scullery, she heard voices outside at the window of the adjoining store-room. The window was opened, and first one man got in, and then another. She knew them by their voices—Mr. Weatherby and a Kirkwal writer, John Beal of Capper-nairn. Kith was in great perplexity what to do. “These wreater bodies was not thought very canny, and this Capper-nairn

was no pick o' them, but an ill-deedy, ill-favoured-looking ape, with as ill a name." They went up-stairs into the room next to the late laird's parlour, "where he was used to draw the rents and keep a' 's papers."

By this time Charlotte was "just in a dreep of dreed and curiosity to find out what the twa was aboot." Slipping off her shoes, she mounted the stairs, and, as the library door was open about a finger's breadth, she could partly hear, though not see them. They were speaking so thick and fast, however, that Kith could not make sense of it—"just a peri word here and there; but the wreater and deil's agent, Cappernairn, appeared to be driving at young master with something that Mr. Raby had no will to an it could be helped."

The language was strange to her, but her memory was good, and she could still repeat some of it. She heard Mr. Raby say, “ ‘ Upon my soul, Mr. Beal, I can’t do it. Can’t we dispense with this horrible ceremony ? Is not the thing as good without ? ’ And the creetur Cappernairn replied with an angry snap, like a terrier that’s got its foot burned, ‘ No ! it won’t do ; it might do to light your pipe, but would never fill it.’ And then he appeared to set upon young master again, but his clatter no mortal ear could make out.” This lasted for some time. “ They barket back and fore this way a good perihle, till at long and last Mr. Raby said, ‘ Well, if *it* must, *I* must ; ’ and then they went into the inner room that was his late honour’s sitting-parlour.”

To the door of that Charlotte had not the courage to follow, but by listening at the partition in the passage, she heard their footsteps moving about within. "They were not speaking. They were moving about as if they were *doing* something."

Cross-questioned by Mrs. Deerness: "How did she know that?" She knew "by the crunch of their footsteps on the floor."

By-and-by these sounds ceased. They returned to the library as if coming out, and Charlotte slipped into an adjoining bedroom. They went down stairs, and she heard the key turned in the glass door of the breakfast-parlour, upon which she ran immediately to the window at the end of the passage, and saw "the creetur Loki, as they call him in Mainland, sneaking

down the garden walk. He was alone. He went out by the private door in the corner of the garden wall, and took down to the shore in the direction of the cove."

Hereupon Kith sat down to ruminate on these strange proceedings. She sat ruminating a good while, "five minutes, or maybe ten," when she was startled by a groan, and the sound as of a person sitting heavily down on a chair. It came from the late laird's room, the same above spoken to off the library. On the other side, there was an old dressing-closet, originally communicating with the parlour, but shut up; but the door, Kith remembered, had a fanlight over it by which it might be possible to get a peep, could she obtain access to the closet. It required a strong effort to muster sufficient courage

for this, but curiosity and fear combined prevailed ; “ she was in such a dread and a whirl it just sooket her in.” The passage door into the closet was open, and against the other with the fanlight over it stood a chair ready for her to mount.

Here Charlotte, who was evidently protracting her narrative from a reluctance to face the conclusion, was seized with a tremor so palpable that Mrs. Deerness, although firmly persuaded that it was all a vision, that the girl had fallen asleep and was dreaming, was nevertheless strongly infected by her agitation.

“ For mercy’s sake, Charlotte,” she exclaimed, “ what did you, what could you see, to make you tremble so ?”

Kith pressed her hands tightly over her bosom, and replied, with streaming eyes,



“Sirs and mistress, as I sit here a living woman—and I might have been a dead ane wi’ the fright—I saw my ald master the laird sitting in’s easy-chair, the self and same as in life !”

Again Mrs. Deerness said, “Oh, Charlotte, you were asleep and dreaming. You were tired with your work, and fell asleep.”

“I was sleepin nane,” continued Kith, a thorough believer in the preternatural character of the vision ; “and there’s mair to tell. Whiles I stude on the chair, glowerin at the ald man—words canna speak it—I had neither thought, nor fright, nor dreded a thing, the breath o’ life gane, as set up for mysel’ as e’er a ghaist that ever cam out o’ the wools—there I stude and saw what I saw ; and e’en thanks and thilk it

is that I'se back in the body here to tell.”  
(So rapt was the girl in her story now, the rest of it reads like a repetition face to face with Effie.) “ And trow ye what did I next see creepin into the dead cham'er—keep us ! what think ?—just the peri worldly wreater creetur, and ither twa confederates at's heels !—oh, it's a limb if ever was ane—I saw's very teeth through's breathless drawn mouth : he gaed up as gin it had been a jackanape, or what they was used to ca' familiar spirits lang syne, and harket (harkened) something at the back o' the ald man's chair. The Lord pardon us a', but it was leesome to see siccan a communing between the living and the dead !”

Kith saw but little more of what took place, but in that lay the thrill of her

whole evidence—the fact being that she had seen *all*, or nearly all, though under the impression that much must have escaped her. “For my head,” said Charlotte, “was beginning to turn; but as far as I mind it gaed as this: There was a table in the room, and it was set before the ald man, I think by the wreater creetur Cap-pernairn—at least the muckle paper that was spread upon it like a cloth, I saw him lay *that*—and syne he sticket a pen into the dead thing’s hand with a kind of hush to the ither twa looking on. What *they* were for, gude kens, but they were there—twa, glowerin ill-deedy-looking whittles—and—and I believe that’s a’. As sune as he had signed’s name the dead ald man fell back in’s chair, and Beal said it was a faint or over fatiguet from sitting up so

lang, or something like that ; and he took out his pocket-napkin and covered up the face. I gat down as an I had been feathers fa'en, and ran the house."

Mrs. Deerness spoke with an effort at calmness, while in reality she shook as with the agitation of a multitude.

" And what do you infer from all this, gentlemen ? for something you seem to infer that *I do not see*."

" I should say not !" cried Weatherby, in the same flippant, almost preternatural, tone as before, when he braved the opening of the seal.

There was a short pause—the likeness of Weatherby in his pallor to the late old man growing every moment more remarkable—a touch of saffron would have made

up the difference—a short pause broken by a single imploring exclamation from the mother ; but it was too late, neither of them heard or heeded.

“ Ah ! so you fancy ! Much I care for your black looks ! ” said the infatuated Weatherby, still bent on keeping possession, as it were, in the very cannon’s mouth ; and the other had no mercy now.

“ Since you will have it,” said the Master—it was a subject of after remorse to him that he suspected his mother of wishing to connive at the fraud ; he could not conceive that her eyes had been so blind to the chief fact in the transaction detailed by the girl Charlotte Kith—  
“ since you will have it, you are not your father’s successor here in Hurlit, although

in Hallow, on the occasion we have just heard of, *you wore your father's night-cap !*”

It came upon her now. She fell without so much as a cry.

They laid her on the sofa, Logan setting out on the moment for Dr. Brechin. Providentially Brechin was in the island, seeing some patients, and hearing a rumour afoot, was on his way to Hillhurlit when the parson met him. Says the old medicus, “I come like a crow to a crow’s court, I fancy, minister—but nothing serious, I hope?”

“So very serious, that I must beg of you to run, Dr. Brechin.” And the doctor was in no more than time, as he afterwards told them at supper in Hallow.

Weatherby’s exit was in keeping. He

would not go near the group kneeling around the prostrate figure, but watched them intently as they pried about the face and hands for signs of returning life. He called out, "Why don't you speak? Is she gone?" He raved, blubbered, and appeared to be fast going insane. Old James Henderland stepped into the room while he was making this noise. At sight of James, in the image, as it were, of his daughter, the bright consumptive cheek burning a little brighter, Weatherby instantly hushed; he offered mechanically to shake hands with the old man, but James declining, the foolish fellow's case was at an end: with a laugh, a last crazy attempt to appear at his ease, and a "Good night to you all," he hastily left the room and the house.

## CHAPTER XI.

ON THE BRIDGE—THE PARTING OF WEATHERBY AND HIS  
TUTOR IN LOCO.

ON the Sabbath morning Mrs. Deerness, awaking from an opiate sleep, inquired of her attendants, Annie Gatehouse and old Stronza, where she was. It was evident, even to the unlettered perceptions of the women about her, that a great change of mind had taken place. They told her as well as they could where she was, and



added, that the gentlemen and the doctor had gone over to Hallow for the night, in respect that the old place was in a manner new upon their hands, and they were rather short of up-putting. She smiled at this expression of their traditional attachment to the old "Place."

She said she would get up and dress; and having done so, she went out, leaving word for the gentlemen, if they called before she returned, that she was gone down to take a walk on the beach. And the women, looking out at window, saw her going down the castle slope.

"An unco change there, Stronza," said Annie Gatehouse. "She's no like the same woman."

"Deed and atweel, Nannie," responded Stronza, "it's been a fell warsle (a severe

struggle), but it's a pity they pat Rab to the door."

"Of course," said the doctor, "we'll have to devise some explanation—this horrid story must be kept from her."

But Melethor, adhering to the severer policy he had adopted, said, "No! the change should be as complete as he hoped it would be salutary; and, besides, his mother's mind was too retentive to render any plausible substitute possible, were he ever so willing that they should try." In this estimate of Mrs. Deerness he was certainly correct.

To return to that memorable Sunday morning. Her heart was not heavy as it had been—a burden had been removed; it would be difficult to say precisely what; her mind, though full of grief, was clear;

all that had happened was distinctly before her, but not egotistically to the exclusion of the living, busy world and its relations. She wept for her foolish, lost sheep, Weatherby, and thought what was to become of him, devising many things for his recovery and restoration to society—poor fellow! the dupe of that bad man, John Beal. For Effie, and the others who perished with her, the Lady of Hallow wept, and for the beauty of the morning, and the rising sun, and the goodness of the Lord, which so many were at that moment enjoying, but these might never again see in the land of the living.

In the mean time a wild report was flying through the island of the disappearance of the wooden bridge. At first the rumour bore simply that “Drapness Brig”

had fallen last night; then, that it had fallen with poor Mr. Weatherby; and lastly, that the body was found—"found by the Dutch sailors belonging to the galliot lying off." (Friends of old Whittet's.)

People were seen gathering about Hill-hurlit, others making along the shore from the haven, among them landlord Whittet. Whittet, being a little in the van of his flock, saw four men bearing the body out of the entrance to the Dead Pool; they fell off out of the old smuggler's sight round the huge rib of rock that forms the south angle of the cape.

As the bearers appeared on the other side with the body, carrying it up the castle slope, the people gathered about the house said, "Oh, sirs!" Others cried, "There's

the laird and the doctor !” Others, again, “ Oh, God help her !”

The latter exclamation referred to Mrs. Deerness, who, returning from her morning walk, and observing the ominous group moving up the slope, was now seen swiftening her pace to overtake it. “ Is it my son !” she exclaimed, while yet at some distance.

The men, like Dutchmen, having laid the body on the ground, the whole multitude above rushed down upon it ; and old Brechin and the Master, lifting the piece of sailcloth that covered the corpse, discovered the blood-stained and death-distorted features of Loki. “ Mr. Byle !” cried Whittet, lifting up the brown backs of his hands ; and all the women wept.

Nor was James Rollockson dry-eyed. Melethor looked still more shocked. And I may add here, in taking farewell of poor Jan, that his remains lie interred in the old churchyard of Hallow.

But where was Weatherby? No boat had left the island, yet he was not to be found. In the search that was immediately set on foot, it transpired that the crazy boor Ingles, or Rob of the Bog, who had been dismissed the preceding night for noisy and disorderly conduct, was also missing. The foolish fellow's fate, however, was not so absolutely deplorable as was surmised.

Weatherby, I said, left Hillhurlit in a state of mind bordering upon insanity. He had no immediate thought of where to pass the night. He took the direction of Sandy-

haven. A dreary, vague idea of suicide came over his mind as he ran up Drapness, in his haste panting and frequently on all fours. Fantastic images and shapes of death were around him, converting the chill breeze of midnight to solemn sounds, and the Dead Kirk bell was distinctly audible in the distance. But equally present amid all was the image of the girl Janet Henderland. A woful spectre, injured and forgiving, she appeared among that grisly crew, who might otherwise have prevailed with her handsome Weatherby; ah! it was a dexterous argument that, to remind him that he was handsome—*that* was still something. In a word, poor Mr. Weatherby had no serious notion of committing suicide.

Panting and blown, he reached the top

and took the bridge, without observing that a dark figure had entered upon it from the other side. It was Beal: they met in the very centre of the wooden bridge.

“What’s the matter now?” said Jan, surprised at the young man’s brusque attempt to push past him.

“Let me pass,” said Weatherby.

“Not until I know what has happened. Be quick! we’re not very safe here.”

Weatherby: “It’s no use. It’s all up. The minister’s maid, Kith, was in the house, dusting, that day, and saw us.”

“Is there proof of that? Have they anything besides the girl’s story?”

“Proof enough, I think, when they have that. Let me pass.”

“I will not. Stand still! We’re not safe here, I tell you. I see it all: you must



turn back with me. Their case, man, when all's done, is not worth a whistle. Hear me," said Jan; "poverty, neglect, contempt, the canker of conscience, everything may be borne with a *character*; let us but save that! We are certain to gain the case; at worst it may be set aside as a posthumous and doubtful title, but our characters will be cleared, and I promise to leave you Cappernairn. I pledge my word it's yours at my death (and I'm not like to live very long), if you'll be guided by me now. Do be guided, Raby: you little know what it is to live without a character."

"No, no, no, Mr. Beal," said Weatherby, with an unwonted flash of spirit; "your power over me is past; it's useless trying to tempt me any longer. I have taken the fancy to work. I am going to America,

and I am thinking that will bring me round better than the character you speak of, or Cappernairn either."

Neither would yield. Wrestling entreaty, cajoling vicarious promises of Cappernairn, shrill imprecations, on one hand; an obstinate, immovable penitent on the other. At length they both took their hands to it, the younger threatening in plain terms to throw the older man over the bridge.

But the dark spirit of Loki rose with his impending fate. He saw that all was indeed over—the young man slipping through his fingers, an irretrievable position awaiting himself.

It was a cruel case. That foolish bet of the old laird's, and his frequent "maunderings" on the subject to his agent, first suggested the idea to Beal. When they

were children, Raby, the second boy, took to the sombre man of business, whose visits nobody seemed to welcome but “papa;” he was the only one that was not afraid of Loki; the urchin got about his heart; then came his poisoned love affair and his supposed debt of hatred to Melethor. With a half consent on the part of the old man, he drew out the disposition; so far it was genuine, and only failed in ultimately getting Mr. Deerness to sign and attest it. The temptation of an accidental opportunity afterwards led him to get the better of that defect. His apprentice Willie Wittle’s narrative was literally true. In the month of October, twelve months before his decease, old Mr. Deerness left at the office a packet for Mr. Beal; Willie forgot to deliver it, but

the packet (containing a common farm lease) came to hand notwithstanding. Jan, who had a favourite maxim in the rearing of his pupils—"Never flyte on them for a fault that's past mending, but wait till the next time and see what turns up"—said nothing to Willie. The Bletherentlet title turned up; Jan enclosed it in the same cover that had contained the farm lease, and put it in the file on the sleeping shelf where it was found by his apprentice Willie in such a manner that the boy would have sworn to its being the original deposit in all the courts in Christendom. The whole scheme was deeply conceived and executed, and, but for Willie's choice of a hiding-place (his master half expected he would have taken it to Belyewane), and its falling [into the hands of the prowling Pro-

fessor Macabodo, thereby giving it the sinister turn it ultimately took, the title might never have been challenged.

All this was present to the unhappy man's mind in the last death-grapple with his dupe. He said with a groan : " He has no heart, no heart ! I have long suspected it, and now I find it—no heart ! " And again, as if moved by some lingering feeling of pity for the other's youth, or it might be that life had still its hold upon himself, he said, " Do you hear *that* ! the brig's giving way. Bethink you, Raby, in misusing me thus, you are laying more on the brig than it can bear. "

But it was too late—a listener had stolen upon their conference : the mad wretch, Inglis, stood at the end of the bridge, a spectator of the struggle.

He had just been turned out of the castle, and was making, it was supposed, for his own home in a distant part of the island. Whether the sight of the scuffle, and opportunity, and temptation combined, had raised his malignant passions to actual insanity, or whether, as was more likely, he only meant in his exalted frenzy to have driven them from the bridge, as he would have done any other obstruction in his path, is uncertain ; he sprang upon the disputants with a shrill cry, but, instead of driving them over the bridge, they recoiled in sudden panic, so that the shock took place right in the middle, where it was weakest. The crazy, weather-worn structure was inadequate to sustain this additional weight. It gave no further warning—only one

shriek was heard as it vibrated for a moment, and then went all to pieces with a crash, precipitating the three to the bottom.

It appeared that Beal in his fall had been thrown to one side. Four seamen belonging to a Dutch galliot that had got becalmed coming round South Cape during the night, going on shore in the morning to visit a spot dear to their smuggling recollections, found the body lying on the margin of the Dead Pool, close to the water's edge. Rob of the Bog was found about a week after: the body of the drowned boor was discovered floating on the surface of the pool.

Weatherby, strange to say, escaped. Falling in deep water, he sustained no material injury, recovered his senses in

time to escape going to Erebus with Bob, and, being an expert swimmer, easily extricated himself.

The remainder of Weatherby's history was, as far as possible, carefully kept blank. The people of the island in general believe that he perished with the others, and that his body, for his mother's sake, was not permitted to come to light. But a few had a story, which they told over the fireside, of a melancholy young man who was sometimes seen walking about Hillhurlit "with his head shaved, and having a light-like appearance (insane), bearing some resemblance to Mr. Weatherby."

This was, indeed, the handsome Weatherby, shorn of his sable locks. It was feared that the brain fever, to which they fell a sacrifice, would have terminated in



permanent insanity. He was for nearly two years a poor secluded invalid in Hill-hurlit, under the charge of a keeper; but ultimately recovered through the skilful treatment of old Brechin. The doctor, when he informed the laird that his brother was recovered, said, in his caustic way, that he was “very nearly as sound now as ever he was.” In addition to his portion under their father’s settlement, Melethor made him a present of a like sum to help his outfit, and then shipped him and “*the wife*” off to America, where, by the last accounts, they were doing well.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE HEALING EFFECTS OF AFFLICTION—LOGAN IS RECONCILED  
TO THE OLD RESIDUARY.

AND now our parson had his own peculiar grief to devour. It could no longer be kept from him. The day that Weatherby was found in a cave on the coast (with the fever upon him, too ill to crawl from his hiding-place) and conveyed to Hallow, to be afterwards transferred to Hillhurlit, the Master himself told Logan.

Deeply, and sincerely, and selfishly, and

passionately Logan mourned the loss of Effie. She was his only sister; except a few distant connexions, the only relation he had in the world. The first day he would not be consoled, and thought of quitting Orkney. On the second, he had recourse to the ordinary mechanical aids for relieving grief. Hearing that there was a mason in the Residuary isle who was a good hand at making and lettering gravestones, he got the captain to row him over, and ordered a stone from the sculptor—a plain slab it was to be, bearing the brief and simple inscription, “EFFIE,” not at the top, as they usually are, but in the centre. The little design he drew with his own pen.

The sculptor, who thought his artistic prerogative interfered with, and, besides,

was paid by the number of letters to the inscription, was for making a much more gorgeous thing of it—"Sacred to the Memory of Euphemia Morland," and so forth; but Logan told him sharply to do as he was bidden.

"A stour carle of a body to be so young," said sculptor Goodwillie, for such was the obituary artist's name.

Writing of the sad event to the few distant relations he had, Logan said, "that if his grief had found any mitigation, it was in the sympathetic interest evinced by Mr. Deerness, the lord of the manor."

I don't know whether Logan had ever seriously suspected the source of this interest; most likely not—brother-like, he had a habit of underrating Effie.

The loss of his steward drove the laird

more than ever to business. He caused search to be made throughout the whole islands, and spared neither trouble nor expense to throw, if possible, some light on the fate of Effie and her companions. He went from place to place himself, disguising his feelings under a pretended fit of the griping and gainful calling of driving hard bargains. Did he recollect a human habitation on the loneliest and most distant cape, where he thought there was a chance of hearing anything, he would go and buy a Highland beast or two, or a score of sheep, from the proprietor, whose living and almost sole society were his flocks. Rollockson had returned to Kirkwal on his way south. He was alone with his mother.

On Friday week (the rest of the family

being by this time in Hallow), he had an afternoon call from the Rev. Mr. Calthrop. The old gentleman intimated that he had something for his private ear, and Melethor, suspecting some official or ministerial visitation, took him into another room, where Mr. Calthrop, putting austerer gravity aside, in his gossiping, roll-about manner informed him that there was a report over the way (meaning in Corbysholm) of a vessel down south-east that had brought word of an Orkney herring-boat wrecked on the Caithness coast, but the people in her were saved ; “ and as the description,” he added, “ answered in some particulars to your advertisement, I thought I would come over and let you know.”

Soured and rendered suspicious by late events, the Master had his doubts of this

volunteered piece of information ; an idle report, in all probability palmed upon him by the old parasitical incumbent as an excuse for coming over to spy the lost ground.

“ Is the vessel still there ? ” he inquired. “ Down south-east, you say ? Do you mean about Windywalls ? ”

“ I suppose so,” said Crawtaes ; “ they just said down south-east, and I did not ask.”

This was spoken so callously, that the other had very nearly prefaced his next with a rather uncanonical exordium.

“ Was there a woman—a girl on board ? ”

“ I could not say for certain,” answered the old gentleman, cautiously. “ I think there was mention made of a female ; what struck me most, was a part of the report

that seemed to answer to your steward William Cults ; when they were picked up, there was a man on board that had lost his hat."

"It's they!" cried Melethor, "as sure as St. Beckaby's well!"—a celebrated monastic spring in Corbysholm, for many years lost sight of until it was brought to light by a reverend antiquarian, Mr. Calthrop's predecessor.

It required very little to set him off—he was subject to such starts and passionate impressions that Effie must be still alive. Kith was ordered with the yawl, before he came to a reflective pause, in the middle of the street.

"But the old self-seeker, that I should say so ! may be taking me in with a plausible tale of his own after all ; he knew the circumstance of the hat. I'll back



and take him with me, and if he is deceiving me, woe be to him !”

And to this resolution he adhered. Having waited with the utmost impatience until the old man had talked such a length of time as in their present altered circumstances he appeared to think absolutely requisite to constitute a visit, he sailed for Corbysholm in the evening, taking Mr. Calthrop with him.

The evening was fine, in its sombre way lovely, sailing across the Frith, but he could make nothing more of Crawtaes. There was no keeping him to the subject—no managing so untractable and selfish a humorist, overflowing with his own gossiping affairs, and the prospect of having the young laird his guest for the night. “And after all,” Melethor reflected, “he knows

nothing of my attachment to this girl, nor is he likely to suspect it; very likely he thinks that all I cumber or care about is Cults, and that, should this report prove a bubble, it will neither break my heart nor spoil his night's enjoyment."

His temper had very nearly broken bounds when his situation struck him in this its proper or mournfully comic light. The man was a clergyman—in the eye of the law still his minister—an old man sunk to the last depth of social selfishness. Insensible to all the other's suppressed groans and curses, Crawtaes joked, laughed, and talked away as if to make up for lost time, while he answered the most pointed questions that could be put to him with such scraps of jocular moralising as "Poor

Cults ! I hope he'll cast up. He was getting a great thief, though !”

Crawtaes would have had him take daylight in the morning to it, but on that point Melethor was inflexible, and after drinking a cup of tea with the ancient gentleman at his manse, he walked over to Windywalls, the principal port of the island. In one sense, indeed, as his host for the night prophesied at his setting out, “he might as well have improved the time where he was, and saved his shoon ;” the vessel that brought the report was gone, having only touched at Windywalls to fill her water-casks. One thing, however, he established, there was actually such a vessel and such a report. Bryce Rannoh, the landlord of the public-house at Windy-

walls, could certify to his having seen and talked to the captain. Bryce's corroboration was always something—small measure of hope it might be—but our laird had been no true lover had he not thought it well worth the walk. The island of Corbys-holm is mountainous. In the loneliest part of his walk back, high and midway between Windywalls and the manse, his heart, that had ever since been hard and captious, softened with a feeling inexpressible; it seemed to amount almost to a revelation that Effie was still alive; and he vowed that if it were so he would be owing a candlestick to the kirk. After all, are these things so entirely the tricks the mind plays upon itself that we suppose them?

On his return to the manse, Mr. Calthrop

had a “neat little bit of supper” prepared for him ; neither did it escape his observation, that the old man had paid some attention to his dress as well—he had put on a clean neckcloth, and a rather better coat than his every-day shabby wear. Calthrop’s manners were vulgar, and he was a gossip and an oddity, but he was not a vulgar man—he possessed too much intelligence and good feeling for that ; his very selfishness was not so much his own grain as the growth of his solitary situation : in the city he would have been no worse in that respect than his neighbours. On the whole, then, the minister and laird spent a tolerably respectable evening together.

Saturday morning, after breakfasting with his reverend host, he took boat and returned home. It was his intention to call

straight on Logan, to propose that they should follow up the report and make a run to Kirkwal. But the light which had shone around him overnight in the mountains of Corbysholm, alas! had completely disappeared with the grey dawn of morning, and the sight of familiar things. There was little or no sea, but a smart breeze off the higher island—off those very mountains—blew him home over the Frith; and the raw morning air, the watery rush under his keel, his own island before his eyes looking cold and indifferent, and the faces of his crew tired of the chase—all brought the truth home to him with fully as much force on the other side that Effie was indeed no more.

What a strange thing, after all, is the selfishness of human nature! How dif-

difficult it is out of the seeming selfish mass to discriminate and detect the real ones! Something, indeed, has been done; as the chemists on poisons, able writers have discovered tests, laid down rules. One is, that the dogs are known by their bark—they are generally the first to cry out. My learned friend Shantrews (whose life I intend writing some day), who wastes his moderate income on riotous living, who pays nobody out of whose hands he can possibly wriggle, who owes me moneys intercepted in my name, and defies me, in the name of friendship, to make him refund—nay, who defrauds and puts off his own back at new-coat time rather than deny that paunch of his a single gratification—thinks nothing of accusing me to my face of the “heinous crime of selfishness”

(who am not more than reasonably selfish)—himself its incarnation—the most astounding phenomenon and shameless pot-bellied phantom that ever, courteous reader, thou didst see hovering on that dim debatable line which some say lies on this side the Land of Debt, others beyond—the same which others again call “just barely tolerated in society,” a fellow of such ready, infinite, and amusing rapacity, that wert thou (again, O courteous reader) to throw down half a dozen nuts, I’ll back him against six monkeys that out of the half-dozen nuts Shantrews gets three.

Another test is the effort it costs a man to do a selfish thing—this is a distinction but too much lost sight of. One man does the little needful quite easily, he is selfish without an effort; another has to



screw his courage to the sticking place. Let us suppose a case in point. Shantrews—but no, woman's love is out of the question with him—let us say his partner, Shiftabout.

Shiftabout loses his sweetheart, and he feels her loss like a man; but he forgets her in a day or two—three at the most. As falls the leaf from the sapless bough in autumn, so droppeth the sweetheart of Shiftabout, and in spring he buds and puts forth his leaves again for another.

This of Shiftabout is, perhaps, the very worst kind of selfishness—worse even than his boisterous partner, Shantrews; because Shantrews, being full of blood, has feelings, such as they are, and can be made to suffer pain; but the correcter Shiftabout has no feeling, there is no

getting at him, sorrow cannot reach him—his sweetheart dies—and here ends the digression.

Our young Norse laird “of the barbarous name,” having his selfish foibles like all the rest of us—a shrewd hand, for instance, at a bargain-making—is a piece of sterner, yet far better, stuff than Shift-about. He cannot forget Effie, but he deliberately determines to forget her. No sooner does he set foot on shore from this his last search (for so he has vowed it shall be), than he forms the grim resolution to banish her from his mind. Her image has no right to haunt him to the exclusion of the common happiness, and business, and enjoyments of life. She is not his wife—she is not his sister—no relation whatever. Had she been his

wife, then he could have mourned for her before the world; but the case being as it is, he must be free to choose elsewhere. Rachel Shore occurred to him. He thought that Effie's death must have done wonders there—supplied what was wanting—humbled, and softened, and made Rachel more amiable.

Accordingly, he spent the better part of the day in business, and did not go near the poor parson at all. He wrote letters—looked over his rental book, marking here and there a defaulter for Mr. Bailiff to be down upon for arrears. “Poor tenant bodies scant o’ cash,” who shall protect them now in this day of the laird’s wrath from that terrible ground officer? They lost a friend in Effie drowned.

But still he could not rest—even the

rental book, with all its sublime details of great and small, failed at last to amuse. An idea struck him that the parson had no more right than himself to indulge in inordinate and unavailing grief; that Logan was so indulging was, of course, certain; and so he thought he would give him a call—not as he had formerly intended, to carry him to Kirkwal, but to recover him to his duty.

Full of this very lairdly idea, he walked down to the manse in the still of the afternoon, about three o'clock. But here, again, the image of Effie overcame him a little; however, mustering up a face, he walked to the door and knocked. It was opened by Kith.

At no time remarkable for the comeliness which belongs to well-defined fea-

tures, poor Kith presented a face from which almost every trace of feature was obliterated by sheer weeping. At sight of the stern laird inquiring for her master, the girl very nearly burst into tears before his face—her woman's instinct suspected, in some measure, how it must be with him; but as, in Kith's notion of the awful supremacy and respect due to the lord of the manor, it would have been a fearful breach of decorum to have done the like of that—in a manner casting up her mistress to him—she flung her apron over her face, and turned her back upon him.

“I asked you, my girl,” said the laird, “is the minister in?”

And Kith, from under her apron, contrived to answer, in single sob—that is, one at every word—“No, sir. I'm think-

ing he's up at the Dead Kirk, laying her headstone (here a triplet). Goodwillie was here this forenoon, and the twa gaed out thegither."

From the manse he walked up to the old church, or Dead Kirk, as the country people call it, and found the minister there, as Charlotte had said. He was not aware of this conceit that Logan had taken into his head of raising a tablet to Effie's memory; he supposed Kith's phraseology was merely a high metaphor thrown out in the uproar of grief, importing that he had gone there to weep. However, under the south gable, where there was a little unoccupied space, he found the poor parson sitting beside the newly laid stone, Goodwillie having only a little ago left him.

The Master was something struck with my friend's peculiar attitude. On a piled-up seat (which was still far from high), made of the turf that had been cut out of its bed, he was sitting in front of the stone, with a pencil in his hand and a small sketch-book before him (though he had never heard that Logan was anything of a draughtsman), engaged apparently in making a view of the sea from Effie's supposititious grave. There was something in this conceit of the parson that jarred the keener nerves of the proprietor: he considered himself to be (for a laird) a poetic fellow enough, but this attempt to give, as it were, a local turn to Effie's "wild and wandering grave," appeared to him a foregone, most sad, and necessary failure. Kneeling down at his

back, without further preface or intimation of his presence, he said, "Bah! give it up, Logan, it's no use trying to compromise; you might just as soon think to recal her as to reconcile us to her loss. The best thing we can do now is to forget her."

Logan, not in the least startled by the sudden interruption, or the harsh estimate of his employment—deep, true grief never is—shut his memorandum-book, and replied, calmly, like a man of the world: "I believe you are right, Mr. Deerness. I believe there really is nothing else left for us; it is the only practical caustic we can apply to the wound, to check our sinful and selfish repinings, and to enable us to say, His will be done. I cannot express how deeply gratifying your sym-



pathy is to me. It is too true, alas ! these mechanical interventions are, indeed, vain ; but the man Goodwillie across the water, who furnished the stone, has so dinned into me the necessity of some inscription additional to the mere name, that I was endeavouring to compose (and he opened his book again at the place) some short account of the manner and circumstances of her death."

"But you have written nothing—the leaf's as blank as the stone."

"I was undetermined," said Logan, "what form the inscription should take."

"My dear fellow, leave it as it is—the name's enough—anything further would only spoil it."

"So I thought myself when I made the little design," said the parson ; "but the

man Goodwillie has put me quite out of conceit of it, with his strange power of recommending his own nostrums.”

So saying, he rose from his turf-stool, and they left the churchyard together. They sauntered towards the shore, talking a little of other things—things pertaining to the living world, its business, pursuits, and enjoyments. Most beautiful was the afternoon sunshine in the Frith, beautiful the opposite coast reflected in the water, the houses and purple hills of Corbysholm, and its summits tipped and resplendent with snow.

A boat is discovered on the Frith coming towards them with swift-plying oar, and having the appearance of an express. The laird's pocket-glass is at his eye in an instant. “It's Calthrop,” he remarks;

“and there’s news of some kind in his face, I can see.” Then, looking very hard in the parson’s, he adds, “Upon my word, Logan, I begin to have a hope—what if Effie has cast up after all! Calthrop was over at me last night with a report,” &c. And he related how he had walked to Windywalls and confirmed the report, and afterwards spent the night at the old Residuary’s. But Logan seemed to doubt whether any good news could come out of that quarter.

However, they hastened down to the shore, which they reached just as the reverend gentleman stepped out of his boat on Peridale sands.

“There’s *something*,” said Melethor; “I haven’t seen him set down his foot at that rate for many a year.”

Ah, beautiful art thou on the sands this time, old Crawtaes !

“ I give you joy, gentlemen both !” he called out, before they met. They met : Crawtaes shook hands with the laird, and, with a bow of rather formal courtesy to Logan, he presented him a letter, saying, “ It gives me great pleasure, sir, to play the part of Peter Posty on this joyful occasion.”

“ From Effie !” cried Logan, turning his back upon them to conceal the rush of tears in his eyes ; so that the Master, in the mean while, fell a ready victim to old Crawtaes.

In his jocular way explaining how he came to be postman, Mr. Calthrop told a rambling story of having sent his beadle Gilbroddie that morning to Kirkwal to get

the greybeard replenished, and other needfuls for the house ; how in Duncan Rapness's shop, Miss Betsy Bruce charged Gilbroddie with a letter to be forwarded immediately ; how the old leaven beadle, on reading the address, demurred. " Are you aware my doo," he said to Bruce, " that him and we's not acquaint." " It's from his sister," says Bruce, " that was thought to be lost in the *Pomona* ;" whereupon the sapient Gilbroddie says, glancing jocularly askance to Mr. Duncan, " That's patent polish ! we can see our face in the story now, sir—a work of humanity. Give me the epistle."

Gilbroddie returned from his provant expedition, the " epistle" passed from the beadle's hands to his master's : so much for the history of the letter. Mr. Calthrop

concluded by giving the following striking illustration of his own haste in the cause of humanity: "I did not," said the reverend joker, "even wait to uncork the greybeard. I just gied it a shuggle to see that it was full, and cam aff wi' the letter!"

Melethor had no particular fault to find with the old gentleman's humour, but upon the whole he was glad when an end was put to this absurd story of his beadle Gilbroddie; while Logan, almost surfeited with the good news, made a sudden rush at the bearer, and subjected the old Residuary to such a hand-shaking, its like had not been felt by Crawtaes since the beginning of these darkened days.

"My dear sir," said Logan, "I can

never sufficiently acknowledge — Let there, I pray, be a better understanding between us.”

The old gentleman bowed assent to this cordial and Christian wish of his younger brother in the ministry; but there was an expression of sad abstraction, a doubtful twinkle in the eye of the reverend old toper as to whether it would do.

They were asked, of course, to dine. At dinner the boys gave toasts and made speeches in honour of Effie come to life again; and the two parsons vowed a mystical friendship, which, in spite of the witherings of party discord, should go on flourishing to the end of their lives. Crawtaes, his better feelings moved, forbore, as was his wont, to set the table in a roar;

not that he did not joke—the habit was too incorrigible for that—but he kept his sallies within bounds. The most unclerical one he made was his last, and after all it was not very bad :

“But it’s getting late, and I must be going. Fill your glasses, laddies, to a parting toast : Laird ! son of mine ancient friend deceased ; and you, my dear brother Benjamin in (hiatus), restored this night to auld Judah,—gentlemen both, I envy you your Monday morning’s sail. Prosperous zephyrs attend your bringing back the lost pet lamb ! It’s almost a pity that Sabbath should intervene !”

There was a roar at this ; Crawtaes could not part without *one*, and he had it. Grouse, who knew perfectly well what the



prophetic “old chap” meant, was secretly beside himself with joy at the prospect of having Effie for a sister. In short, they one and all loved him, as only young lads at their unrepobating years can love such an old man. And when the time came for him to go, Grouse further proposed, privately, that, as the “old chap” had done so well, he would be none the worse for a convoy home.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SUNDAY.

LOGAN preached a thanksgiving sermon—a very fine one. As the discourse, in its original composition, was drawn from the wells of bitterness, and required in consequence some filtering, to this task the good parson rose early in the morning to draw from the well of gladness. He had just completed his task, and was sitting at breakfast, when he was surprised to receive at so early an hour a visit from his

friend the "lord of the manor." He was still more surprised when Melethor told him he was on his way to Kirkwal. I need scarcely add that the parson was displeased.

"I thought," said Logan, "you had arranged that we were to sail together on Monday morning."

"So I did," he replied, "and the arrangement still holds—I have left word with William. But I must go to-day myself."

"I should have thought, Mr. Deerness," observed the parson, "that respect to the day might have induced you to consecrate recent experiences——"

"My dear parson," says the other, interrupting, "you must excuse me for this once. To-day I really cannot be confined within the walls of a church. But don't think that I am setting an ill example,

and taking others with me : the *Brenda* is waiting to bring you and the boys to-morrow. I go alone, and nobody need see me."

"But how is it possible to get to Kirk-wal alone?"

He laughed, and said, "Oh ! there are ways—ways of getting from island to island, if you are a good jumper and not afraid ; in a calm morning like this, without a breath of wind, it's as easy as crossing the school dubs was, or paidling in the burn lang syne."

"Why, my dear sir, you are quite poetical this morning !" says the parson, with a face of intense gravity.

"Only you think it's but a pagan kind of Pegasus I'm on," said the Master.

The parson grinned. "Nay, now you are jocular ; pardon me if I say that I do not quite understand this exuberance of spirits. Your recent great anxiety

and gratitude for your mother's recovery ought undoubtedly to beget a lively emotion; but expressed in this way, I am afraid — pardon the hint — I am afraid it comes very much to the old thing, a *Sunday lark*. I could lay a wager now," says the parson, getting a little jocular in his turn, "this is some sudden whim you have taken into your head to go and spend the day with your friend Mr. Rollockson, or yonder burly, fiddling, bagpiping Norseman, Markus Skeldar!"

At this, the Master looked as clear and sweetly grave as the parson himself. "No, no, I promise you! Rollockson I hope to see, if he has not left for the south, but the burly, fiddling, bagpiping 'beast' I am not going near." The joke of this speech lay in quoting the parson's well-known description of the laird of Long-Annot more correctly than the reverend author himself in his speech preceding.

It was evident, then, that Logan had no suspicion of the real object of his pilgrimage to Kirkwal. From what took place on Saturday afternoon, he thought he might; but seeing him on the top of his thanksgiving sermon, and as pure and rapt as the morning itself, he was glad to find that for once the parson was no witch. A high, proud fellow, Melethor, and just the man to keep his own secret—especially from the none so blind as those who won't see; something, as our own poet recommends, the lairdly heart would still like to keep to itself: it was by no means certain that Effie would accept him.

On this point Melethor had thought much, and like a gentleman. He did not anticipate personal objections; so far his way was clear. A handsome person, a devoted lover, and a position in life beyond anything she probably ever thought of,

all that was in his gift to offer Effie. But then his defective orthodoxy: there was the rub. So that there was an appropriateness, we now see, in his devoting the day as he did. What better, simpler, wiser course could he have taken, than just to fly to Effie's bosom, and get anything that was defective in that all-important lever of the beating machine adjusted and put right?

“But what a blind buzzard and exotic monster of a parson was this—unless he was playing the hypocrite!” cries my old acquaintance, Andrew Spleen. Well, no. Our learned friend Shantrews assures me it was a case of what lawyers call a *foregone conclusion*. “There’s never a court-day,” says Shantrews, “but we have one or more of them occurring. A foregone conclusion,” explains our learned friend, “has nothing whatever to do with the

clear facts of a case ; it is that preconceived image of it which a man sees as plain as the nose on his face when he looks at himself in the glass, and rather than part with which he will make an ass of himself. In the instance submitted of parson Morland, the foregone conclusion is composed of two ingredients. In the first place, the brotherly moderation of the parson's views with regard to his sister's advancement in life ; in the second, his high—by the way, amusingly high—estimate of this Laird Melethor's sympathy with himself. These combined were perfectly sufficient to blind What's-his-name to the fact that Mr. Deerness was in love with his sister, even had the symptoms been more apparent than they were."

So runs the interlocutor of Mr. Shantrews. I have but one objection to it. In its judicial wording (I had almost said



callousness) it would seem to imply that the parson's "moderation" arose from some inherent coldness or defect in his affection for his sister, while just the reverse of this was the fact; Logan's affection for his sister was strong and healthy, tyrannical and real. They were both young. The idea of Effie's advancement in life by marriage had never occurred to him; never for a moment had her maiden image wavered in his mind or fancy, or ambition conjured up for her a lover in any of these youths of the House of Hallow; and if he seems chargeable here with a neglect of the opportunities, such neglect, I repeat, was owing solely to the singleness of my friend's affection. There is a time, says the wise man, for everything. It is the part, undoubtedly, of a brother to see to a sister's interest; but when two are cast adrift in the world (as in the case

of our hero and heroine), the fraternal affection, which is for ever on the look-out, and ripe from the very first to parting, must, we think, appear to most people questionable, and to hang on one horn or the other of a dilemma; if the example of affection set be genuine, be it so, but then it is bad morality, savouring of that ambition which is covetousness. But hang Shantrews! and hang Andrew Spleen! they are the causers of trite reflection wherever they come.

In sober truth, Logan was both surprised and vexed at this exhibition, if not of levity, at least of hare-brained feeling, in a man whom he was disposed to admire for qualities the very opposite. Watching his departure, he observed that he was literal in his purpose of going alone. From the manse door he saw him

steal down to the beach, and in a small shallop or skiff, which he rowed himself, pass over the Frith towards Corbysholm. The church bell was ringing across the water. It was the first time Logan had heard it so distinct, the island atmosphere being generally muffled and cloudy; but this morning it was pure, transparent, and elastic, tinged with a slight frost.

A minute or so the parson stood entranced, listening to the gorgeous melody of the bell—the old church bell—as it rolled across the glassy waters of Hallow Frith, with its sonorous weight causing the sheet of water and all its shadows to wave, until, as if himself filled by the sound, there came at last a huge sigh to his relief. Thus recalled to the waking world, Logan shook his head, and began to apostrophise the shallop on the Frith, as though

its occupant, who urged the flight of the little vessel, had still been within earshot.

“ You are wrong, my friend Melethor. It would need, indeed, to be a clear case of necessity or mercy which could justify this wild-goose flight. And I question much whether he has any more appreciable excuse for absenting himself than the old story, the vacant longing after nobody knows what—the chime of yonder bell, or the light of morning in the clouds! Be the day judged by the result! If he come not back a sadder and a wiser man, I am no——”

He was interrupted by the song of Kith in the kitchen, some heathen northern amatory ditty, struck up by the girl in her gladness, oblivious of the sacred day :

“ There was a lass from Helgolan  
Was drooket in a storm,  
She laid a wager wi’ her lad  
That she wad be there before him.

“ The lad from Greamsay green he cam,  
And the race it was a wonder,  
In the mickle saut sea he saw her gae down,  
At’s ingle cheek he fund her.” \*

Furious, the parson darted into the house and silenced the unseasonable warbler.

“ I am no prophet,” Logan was about to have said. Let us see—in such a hasty glance at this love-pilgrimage, or “ the Laird’s long Sunday walk,” as our limits will now admit of.

In palliation of his travelling on the blessed Sabbath, it may be remarked :

First, the extreme urgency of the case : he was in love — in the alternating ecstasy, that is to say, of a great hope and a great doubt.

And second, that to a man of his hardy

\* There is an old Norse ditty current among the peasantry of Orkney, of which the above, or something very like it, is a fragment ; but I suppose Mr. R. Chambers will dispute its authenticity, as he has been doing lately in the case of others of our old ballads much better known to the public.

nature and caustic temperament, not given habitually to indulge the softer class of sentiments, the new-born feeling was indescribably elevating. It was a discovery, so to speak—a new light upon a great subject—the hopeful view of the issue on the whole predominating over the doubtful.

When the church bell at Calthrop's "rang in," and the Residuary Isle was once more clothed with the silence and solitude proper to the day, if the pedestrian took it to heart for a moment, shall we say, therefore, that it was his conscience that pricked him, and that he started away like a guilty thing? by no means; great and sweet sounds, as the church-going bell and the like, are *existences*, and when they cease, the heart sighs of itself over something expired—we know not what—'twas but a sound, and we know that it

has ceased to beat within its metal tabernacle; but what then? Reflection looking up to the Source of Light, can trace no end to what was lately so sweet in the ear, no limit to its impression on the boundless expanse.

But the church-going bell is an old story. Indeed is it, my trusty reader, very old; but perhaps in the very next paragraph we may come upon something still older, for in that direction, as we all know, lies our only chance of getting a glimpse of anything new. So, courage, and allons !

On the summits of Corbysholm, standing on the brink, he stopped to take a peep into the hollow, where he had seen the marvellous light; the light was no longer visible now at broad noon, but the hollow was there, looking very peaceful, fresh, and green, the grass all in a sparkle

with the melting snow from the hill-tops trickling through it.

Mounting Magnus-law, the highest of the group (just powdered with so much snow as to take the impression of the foot), looking about him in the broad effulgence of noon, why does the pilgrim start at sight of the distant weathercock of Kirkwal? Why: his hope, his pride, his fears are all up and trembling together, for within the fane, in the midst of the congregation, he sees Effie. But, so far as he can judge, she is not thinking of him; not that she is giving absolute and undivided attention to the sermon either; she is thinking of something—he can see that—but it is not of him. Will she say yes? or will she answer, “See you not that between thee and me there is a great gulf full of the abundance, and sunshine, and friends, and good things of this world, which I may not



pass over?" The reader cannot have forgotten our shabby genteel friend who appeared visibly to Logan in Princes-street. Taking advantage of the pilgrim's trance, what does the needy, invisible wretch whisper in the rapt man's ear? "*If she should be engaged now!*"

So the lover was cast down from the mountain by the devil. Question: Could this have happened on a week-day? However, taking heart of grace and heart of fear together, onward and downward he journeys over the deep green intervening valleys.

But not to be tedious in the enumeration of incidents, let us bring the journey to a close by saying briefly that he was peculiarly fortunate in the matter of ferryage—that is, in getting a cast from island to island—and that the "lover's pilgrimage," or the "Laird's long Sunday walk," lasted,

as he found on looking at his watch, exactly six hours and five minutes, having left home at 9.30 A.M., and arrived at his house in town at 3.35 P.M. So that by getting in before the final benediction he escaped one great lover's apprehension of scandalising Effie: what if he had happened to arrive plump in the very midst of the "kirk skelling folk!" Accordingly we slipped in, expecting to find that rest and heart repose so indescribably grateful after a long journey.

But, oh Heavens! as Mr. Carlyle might exclaim, Shantrews again! It may have been that the approaching twilight, and our sight, a little disordered by the fatigue of a long walk and the brackish water we had drunk, aggravated the appearance of the vision; but there, making the stillness of the house hideous, distended almost to bursting with suppressed laughter, sat

Shantrews (a strange fellow, ladies, and one who has done some havoc among you in his day, so he says), who, ever since his expulsion from society, has run about like a cacodemon, condemned to everlasting cachinnation (his function being to laugh at everything that has the least smack of virtue in it), the same who is also not unaptly sometimes called *Asmodeus hodiernus*, or the modern Devil on Two Sticks; blown up, as I have said, to bursting with suppressed laughter, there sat the amiable youth, streaming from the compressed orifice of his mouth a scroll as far as from the sofa to the window that looks into the garden (for it was in the back parlour that these things which I am now relating befel us), and on the scroll was the following inscription, which, by the whiz of the air escaping at the mouth, became in a curious manner tinkingly audible: “*Marry the*

*daughter of an old Salt-market Whig!  
it's worth all the money !”*

No sooner had this announcement streamed through the window-panes than, at the same moment, there began to fall a close, thick, small rain, a door in the garden wall, communicating with a certain patrician back lane, was opened, and two gentlemen entered the garden, walking in close conversation together down by the west border of leeks, which, being shot at this season, reared their heads tall and bulbous, of the order of *Mater dolorosa*. These gentlemen were Mr. Rollockson and Robert Belfeur of Abbeyhall ; the latter having, probably, availed himself of his friend's pass-key to make a near cut from church to the inn where his carriage was waiting to carry him home.

Bland was right after all, and Logan, too, was a prophet ; this Melethor, laird

of the barbarous name, did really now start back from the window, like a guilty thing; now, forsooth, his excursion appeared to him as in the highest degree romantic, hare-brained, and absurd; while sufficiently drawn back to be out of sight himself, he watched these distinguished friends of his *laying their heads together* down by the leek border. Thicker fell the thick, small rain, instilling its moisture into every living and every dead vegetable thing; the poppy skulls, of which also there was a bed, might hold each a hundred or two hundred drops when full, but no powers of computation could have reckoned the quantity that went to the adornment of one of those breeding leek-tops, or the visible pellucid millions that, glistening in the autumn spider's deserted web, hung like so many constellations along the pea-stick rows and in the naked

branches of three old apple-trees. Scarcely more than five minutes altogether had elapsed since our entering the house, but what a change in those five minutes ! The cloud which had supplied the shower dissolved, or was taken up into the higher clouds, the rain ceased, and the sky, a canopy of the deepest indigo resting on a single line of golden light, while the murmur of the ocean was just sufficiently audible to form its basis to the ear, introduced that dark and marvellously brilliant twilight of a Scottish Sabbath evening, which, if the reader would taste in perfection, he should pay a visit to these islands of Ultima Thule.

Meanwhile, as when the reader enters his shower-bath on the morning of the first of January, and puts up his hand to the cord, even so in the love-shivers stood the Master, listening on tiptoe to catch

the voices of his friends—he had an instinctive persuasion that they would call and find him there—doubtless expecting also to catch the sound of another voice which, as matters had turned out, must needs have an odd effect mingling with those gentlemen's tones—in Ophelia's phrase, like sweet bells jangled. It is not easy to paint the peculiarly refined horror of such a situation: let the reader conceive it, when the voices, as above predicted, were actually heard at last coming in from church — Belfeur, Rollockson, Effie, and the Bruce—let the reader, I say, conceive what were the sensations of the lover in the back parlour when the “*hem*” of the laird of Abbeyhall, dry, dignified, and sonorous, was heard replying to the gabbling apologies of Bruce, and—as is the custom of phantoms and foul apparitions of all kinds—the caco-

demon Shantrews vanished with a melodious twang and a repetition of the scroll, “*It’s worth all the money !*”

Before the august presence thus introduced, it were perhaps superfluous to say that Effie’s little story of her awful night at sea, and shipwreck the following day on the coast of Caithness, was not told in her lover’s arms ; she told it after dinner, indifferently, to say the truth, but like herself, with some pretty touches, too—told it to the audience—to Mr. Belfeur, listening with that chill and steady attention which politeness always prescribed to Robert Belfeur of Abbeyhall—to the Writer to the Signet, who heard it with a more sympathetic face, but, in its way, quite as aristocratic—to Melethor, who heard it on thorns, and with a preternatural brightness in his eyes, as though he apprehended a return of the squatting demon



Shantrews—the wretch, I had forgot to say, had even gone so far as to deny that Effie was pretty, objecting to the *retroussé* character of her profile, which, until then, the other had thought so fascinating—and so, to use Logan's old phrase, our host sat on thorns between his love and his pride about Heaven knows what, or what he would be at.

And then Logan and the boys arrived next day, and the parson got some hint of the matter (through Grouse, probably—the little chap could not hide his mortification); but at this advanced stage of the story it would be unfair to hint a conjecture how far my friend sought to improve the dispensation.

Effie neither fell into an incurable melancholy, nor was threatened with consumption; she cried out her disappointment heartily and bitterly in one night,

and after that, believing that her path in life lay elsewhere, she had recourse more frequently to the society of her friends at Peri-Point. She found a mine of consolation in her old friend Jean the eldest. Jean was a philosopher of Nature's despised school: with no talent in the world, Jean had that sort of intuitive wisdom which is better, which keeps hoping and talking on, despite the wane of mere personal attractions, insensible alike to the progress of time, and, what is harder still to elude, the comments of contemporaries.

So passed away several months—winter brightened into spring, and spring into summer. There was a large and fashionable company at Hallow House; and Effie took to wandering more and more with Jean, forgetting, in her friend's rather abstruse metaphysics and way of commenting on the "great folk," the memory

of her romance, if, indeed, it had ever attained that length in her imagination. That Effie was not love-smitten, in the vulgar sense of the term, I could stake the pen between my fingers : a pure mind and an affectionate heart like hers are already love itself, without reference to any object of desire. I am informed that during these long walks, sometimes as far as the great Hurlit valley, she did, indeed, encourage her friend to talk of “this new laird Melethor,” who, in an unapproachable way, was a great favourite with Jean.

“He’s not so easy and affable like as the late auld man his father,” Jean would observe; “not so like one of ourselves; but he keeps his distance and does more good. My father says they may crack of his queer religious opinions as they like, but a gude laird makes a gude tenant, and

he wadna gie the grip o' Melethor's hand on rent-day for the braid and the shake of many an orthodox loof—like his cousin Gilchrist's in the mainland, for instance, or even your brother, Effie, our ain minister : *their* squeeze, says my father, only maks me the more down-hearted, but *his* strings me up, as a body might say, to the skies."

This was a little hyperbolical, but Effie, perhaps, did not object to it on that account.

One day, returning from Peri-Point—a bright, breezy day it was in the beginning of the following season—Effie was caught by the wind off one of the numerous smaller capes that at every two to three hundred steps flank the indentations (for they can hardly be called bays) along the shore : she had with some difficulty just weathered the point, when suddenly and

alone her wavering lover stood before her. His company had left the day before.

He looked preoccupied, not to say out of humour; so absent, indeed, as not even to observe the fluttered and unpresentable state that Effie was in with her hair blowing about her eyes and her dress threatening to go to ribbons in the wind. In like grave manner, after shaking hands with her, he said :

“ You have been a good deal of a stranger, Effie, this some time past : what has become of you ? Our friends left us last night ; I thought you would have been over to see them away. Logan was there. Where were you ? ”

“ Are they away ? ” said Effie. “ I did not know they were to go so soon. Logan went out without saying anything about it. ”

“ It was too bad of Logan, ” said his

patron the laird, with the dry addition, "but as parsons are not expected to be men of the world, we can't blame him."

This looks as if my friend had been dabbling a little on the principle of sister for sister—"If I am not good enough for yours, you shan't have mine."

He was silent for a couple of minutes, until they had weathered the point into the next little bay, when he said, referring to the same subject: "They're all gone, however, and you have missed half the fun as well as the great news. Who do you think is going to be married?"

Effie, of course, made the customary attempt to guess; it was very faint, for just then the bright breeze blew so strongly as to drown the beating within and produce a sensation of lightness, as though she were being uplifted from the ground and blown for good and all away.

Married! Could it be himself? Perhaps to one of those grand dames—perhaps to the Fräulein von \* \* \* \*, for there had been a German baron and his daughter in the dance. She ran over one or two names at a venture, all wide enough of the mark, of course, and then he told her :

“ Our friend Markus Skeldar.”

“ Mr. Skeldar! Oh!” cried Effie, with almost a scream of relief.

“ Even so, the stout Malthusian Markus. Harriet is to be one bridesmaid, and he expects you to be the other.”

“ Surely! And who is the——”

“ The Fräulein von \* \* \* \*.”

Effie laughed, and cried “ Oh!” again.

“ But she speaks very good English,” said Melethor, laughing in his turn, “ and has a very fair notion of our ways for so accidental a visitant, and she really likes her great beeg man; only when they are

married he must desist to blow that horrid pipe, and if he must have music, get an leedle one such as they have in Germany."

Thus laughing over Mark's marriage in the course of an accidental walk, Effie renewed, to some small extent, her own relations with the Master. As soon as she got home she slipped into the kitchen beside Kith, her never-failing haven of refuge in petty trouble, and there sat her down, light and vacant at heart, after her long walk and the tossing of the summer gale. A thousand memories had been stirred, but all intermingled and confused—confusion not altogether unpleasant, however—like the superfluous blossoms shaken from a tree when the fruit is in the bud. Effie's was one of the kind of faces not difficult to read—a tell-tale face, the vulgar phrase is—and hence it was, I suppose, that Kith, leaving her ironing,



with *her* very queerest face, came close to her mistress and said—the odd girl conceived herself, as usual, to be speaking under some direct and special kind of inspiration—let that, however, be as it may, Kith said, “I have just e’en been gauntin’ and fit to rive the very day aff my back for your comin’ in frae’r walk. Oh, mistress! oh, Miss Effie! if ever woman was a witch I am ane this leelane blessed day! It’s al’ settled, as sure as I am ironing minister’s shirts—and there’s the iron in my hand—or e’er this simmer’s bla’n you’ll be Leddy in Hallow!”

“Oh, Kith, you have been in the clouds again!” said Effie, laughing.

“The ne’er a fut o’ me have I been frae minister’s shirts,” said Kith.

So spake this untutored girl. But whence, then, the mystery—the riddle? If, after all, M. had so unaccountable a

fancy to marry beneath him, was there no Sphinx to solve the enigma? Now the truth was, that Effie's fears did "stick deep" in his mother. Greatly altered and subdued, and much of her time occupied with her unfortunate Weatherby, now an inmate of Hillhurlit, the Lady of Hallow's demeanour towards E. was marked by a uniform and placid kindness, that to the latter must have sometimes appeared ominous when she saw herself reflected therein — in its deep passionless tranquillity looking so calmly secure that nothing could ever disturb it. How much rather, many a time, would Effie have had her break out in the old manner! She frequently took Effie with her when she walked over to Hillhurlit to see Weatherby, of whose folly and downfall she spoke with perfect candour and good sense, while, with the strong tenderness

of a mother, she never admitted his criminality. Misled was the phrase—misled by that unfortunate and unhappy man now no more. At her request a marble tablet had already been raised to Beal's memory in the old church of Hallow. "He was a bad man," she observed to her eldest son, on first proposing the thing to him, "but your father had a regard for him for many years, and we cannot let him lie there like a dog."

A painful surmise would sometimes intrude, which made the poor girl feel very miserable—namely, that the secret was simply neither more nor less than that she was watched, and kept in a kind of honourable disgrace on account of the hand she had in the downfall of the once fashionable Weatherby—for this young fellow, as she well knew, had cut a much more important figure in the eyes of his

mother, and of the Orcadian youth generally, than we have had time to make of him in the story; and that all these walks which she was obliged to take with his mother, to see the prostrate Adonis at Hillhurlit, were imposed upon her by way of penance. Now that there was not something of the sort in the mind of Mrs. Deerness, I am not prepared to say; but Effie thought she could discern it at the least reference to Weatherby, in the stern looks of the brother, in Melethor himself. True, her motives were pure, she had acted for the best; but her conduct was wrong, and she had committed a great error in judgment in not preventing the mischief by a timely revelation, as indeed errors of the kind are so easy to discover after the event; and wretched were the moments to Effie when she suffered under the im-

pression that it was on this account she had fallen in the general estimation.

The sentiments then of Mrs. Deerness on this final subject were inscrutable. A more cheering view would sometimes occur to brighten the solitary day. Effie's notion here referred to was that this fancy or partiality for her society might after all be capable of a very simple explanation—to wit, that Mrs. Deerness had selected her to be the depositary of her little dowager complaints and secrets; she did not always, for example, or even very often, repine at the loss of her popular Weatherby, and the high hand she might have carried, could she have got it in there; on the contrary, her conversation turned much more generally on the unsatisfying pomps and vanities of life, on the fashion of this world which passeth

away—its hopes—its sin and sorrow—and the attainable calm awaiting us even on this side the grave. This sort of confidence, while it could do no harm to Effie, was not altogether meet for the ears of a daughter, at the yet unformed age of Miss Deerness. But in Effie's case the persiflage belonging to this species of resignation was perfectly harmless, and it not unfrequently chanced that her homilies involved the good lady in little amusing contradictions, evincing that she had still some smack of life and relish for its pomps and vanities. One instance may be given as being in point. A long conversation on the subject of the other "boys," their launching and setting up in the world, had somewhat exhausted Mrs. Deerness, and induced a silence of a minute or two in their walk, which was at length broken by Effie's remarking, with a slight yawn, that

Thursday next was Mr. Skeldar's marriage day; she started, flushed a little, and with a small, scornful laugh, not the less so that it was perfectly good-natured, and the old pettish idiom of what for how, replied, "Yes, and I suppose we'll all be expected to go to it. I did not think that Melethor would have let *Skeldar* off before him whatever!" Upon the whole, as all chance or thought of ever following in her footsteps disappeared, Effie became daily more and more attached to this interesting and remarkable woman.

But the ladies, I see, are impatient for the weddings, and at least one has been announced. On a lovely June morning, our party being the first to arrive, we found the gigantic Markus seated in full dress in the hall of his house at Long-Annot, with the front door open, playing his beloved instrument; he shook hands round (still

keeping the drone going) with a face of hospitable, indeed, but intense gravity.

“ Confound it, Mark !” said his friend Melethor, who had of late much foregone all custom of laughing, and therefore did not laugh with the boys, “ is that all your respect for the day, knowing as you do the Fräulein’s objections ? Do drop that horrible noise !”

“ Ou ay, Melethor,” replied the bridegroom, “ we all ken your want of taste ; it’s not a horrible noise, man, its a jubilaté of my own composing, and if you man hae the truth, neither more nor less than my fareweel to the pipes. But I’m sayin’, Melethor,” said his friend, taking him aside, “ when are *you* to make it out ? with the auld Whig’s pretty daughter I mean ; do you mind what you said about her one night you were here ?”



“No more of that, Mark,” replied M., with a rugged though momentary flush; “you were half tipsy, and I was no better, and I suppose I talked of the girl like a beast; there are a hundred difficulties and objections, to say nothing of my having since discovered that she has not that liking for me which I once thought it possible she might have. And besides, between ourselves, Mark, with the boys to set up, I can’t afford to marry yet. So (with a shake of the hand appropriate to the occasion), good-by to you, old boy, for a while.”

Mark, now as uxorious as before, like all Benedicts, he had been a scoffer at the blessed estate, exhorted his friend to think seriously of what he was about. “She’s not of the kind,” said the subdued, soft-hearted fellow, “to keep over the winter, like some of our ain aristocratic pippins,

and if you don't pick her up, another may."

It was at Mark's wedding feast that Effie was asked, and consented to become Mrs. Melethor. Nothing could well have been simpler than the way the thing came about. Effie, in high spirits from the dance, forgetful of everything but the gaiety and enjoyment of the moment, came up to him, deputed by Grouse, to get him to ask Dropogrog for a favourite song, which he generally sang at that period of the evening.

"Why, Effie," said he, taking her by both hands, as on a former occasion, "you are magnificent, beautiful to night!" He drew her a little closer to him, and she perceived that there were tears in his eyes, and a certain haggard expression which said in every line of his face, 'Effie, won't you take me?' And

from that moment Effie knew what her destiny was to be. He presented her that same night to his mother as his intended wife. I don't know that I should be justified in saying it was a great shock to Mrs. Deerness, although it certainly was a great surprise; but it may happen at times that there are worse things in the world than a good surprise. Perhaps something of the kind was required in the case of Mrs. Deerness: it must be hard for a woman of cultivated tastes and princely tendencies to sit and behold her place vacant, day after day, unfilled up. The union, she was understood to say, might take place as soon as they pleased, with *her full consent and approbation*. The sentence is purposely put in italics, in order to mark how utterly mistaken a certain young lady was in her diffidence of her mother-in-law. This was before

the laird. But when they were by themselves, Mrs. Deerness, in the old Oriental fashion of expressing affection which belongs to all the greater womanly types of character, fell upon Effie's neck, and kissed her and wept.

Melethor talked a little largely, as lairds will, of settlements, but Effie, with a tremulous lip, would hear of nothing—nothing—only if he liked to settle five-and-twenty or thirty pounds a year on old Mr. John Davidson, of Chapel-end, it was the least return she could offer to so true a prophet. He laughed, kissed her heartily, and promised.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE LAST.

It would be unpardonable to drop the curtain without saying a few words of my friend Logan.

Of course, Logan married Miranda? He might, I believe, have had Miss Deerness had he chosen, but it was otherwise ordained; in fact, he disapproved of intermarriages, or double marriages, as they are called, in families; "and since dear Effie," said he, "has won the race here, be it mine to look out elsewhere."

No longer sustained by the romance of

Miranda, and E.'s marriage leaving him for a time completely alone, Logan began to repine at his situation. Clerically speaking, Orkney was too limited a field for a man of his attainments and ambition ; and socially, though not without its own peculiar attractions, 'twas to be apprehended that the wear and the tear of the rambling life they led would eventually be too much for the cloth. The fiddle and bagpipe were again loud in the halls of Long-Annot (the Fräulein's musical objections to the native instruments having proved happily short-lived)—everywhere life held on in the ordinary course ; but a black flock of starlings (ominous sign of sterile desertion !) had settled on the chimneys of Peridale manse. Nothing would drive the birds away ; they stuck to him like harpies. All night, and, what was worse, all day, they kept up their mys-

terious chatter over his devoted roof, till he was well-nigh driven to believe in the heathenish doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and that the birds could be none other than the malignant old gossips of classic antiquity come back in that form to annoy him, as being now, so to speak, through his classical attainments, one of their own lineage and language! He could not so much as go out for a walk but at sight of him they were sure to swell and ruffle and set up their chatter, not in the purest Greek, indeed, but plain, and as the poor parson would say by way of melancholy pun, *attic* enough to be understood.

“Rot him! he’s not away yet—there’s that walking, unfeathered clod again!” Once he borrowed an old rusty pistol from Captain Kith, and with it dispersed the foul, annoying brood, but next morn-

ing they were back again, blacker and in greater numbers than ever.\* In short, another winter of his Patmos setting in, Logan could bear it no longer.

Accordingly, by making interest in the proper quarter, he was at length, after a residence of three years in Orkney, translated to the Free Church of Glenalmond, within a mile or two of his old domicile at Chapel-end, where, in the enjoyment of abundant clerical and other intercourse, the elasticity of my friend's spirit soon returned, like a bow, to its strength. He sided with the moderate party in the Church, and was cozily intimate with a few of the most choice theological spirits on that side of the question.

\* The number of these birds in the Orkney Islands is something almost incredible. The little fellow Grouse in the story used to relate it, as one of his greatest feats of gunnery, that he once bagged fifty at a shot off the roof of the malt-barn.



He still kept up the Orkney connexion, once a year paying a visit to Hallow, and thence on his return accompanied by Effie and her husband as far as Kirkwal, where he fought his old battles over again with Gilpin, now a greater latitudinarian than ever, and with his old acquaintance Miss Rachel S., to whom Gilpin was said to be paying his addresses. The girl, it is true, gave him all the provocation that lay in her little power; still, in argument with a lady, it was very, very shocking to let his temper get so whetted, and Effie was perfectly ashamed at the ferocity of his retaliation. Thus, while Melethor and his friends of the old bottle school had their laugh, poor Mrs. Melethor's face was frequently crimsoned by these Amazonian battles, in which the reverend proved too many for the fair. And the last time they got him shipped off south again, Effie

said, with the half-tear in her eye, as they turned to walk up the pier, "She was quite sure that Logan had got the canker, and was to be an old bachelor all his days."

"Not he," said the laird, laughing; "wait a bit."

And the landed brother-in-law was right—my friend's bachelor sands were run at last. The summer immediately following his last trip in the north, when Glenalmond was again gladdened by a visit from his kinsfolk, it was then that Logan began to throw out chuckling hints that 'twas odds but ere long he would be even with them. And straightway on the back of that Effie found out that ever since, or at least from a very early period since his settlement in Glenalmond, he had been under promise of a *fête champêtre* to the ladies of the neighbourhood.

"I wonder who it can be?" said Mrs.

M., and she went over all the likely names that she knew on the list of local belles. "Who do you think it can be, Melethor? It struck me—did it not you?—that he looked a little sweet upon that Miss Dudgeon last night."

If matrimony had not improved Melethor's wit, as, indeed, it seldom does, it was amply made up by that kind of provoking knowingness which fond husbands find to answer the purpose quite as well.

"Dudgeon?" said he, "that was the girl who sang—I did not particularly remark Logan with Miss Dudgeon; however, old Dudgeon, they say, is immensely rich. At any rate, the secret—if there be a secret—can hardly, I imagine, keep much longer. And, by the way, as Rollockson's to be out and Rachel Shore is staying with the Blands, I suppose you'll have to ask the latter."

The Blands ! that was a fruitful vine Effie had never thought of.

It was evening—nearly ten o'clock at night—after the *fête champêtre*, when my friend, his secret being yet intact, sat down with his guests for the night. The W. S., complaining of lassitude (the effect of so much laughing and talking for a whole day), Effie said, in her straightforward, popular way, “I suppose, Mr. Rollockson, that means a tumbler.”

“Ah, well, God bless me ! I fancy it does,” replied R., setting off again. “We have had a capital day, and the minister did the thing in great style, and we are all entitled to a sound sleep. I remember once, at Belfeur’s, where you’re not allowed toddy, I slept the thin shilpet sleep of claret—the most miserable night, without exception, I ever experienced in my life.”

The brass kettle was brought in, and the Writer to the Signet, now in his element, continued: "Sit you on the sofa, ladies—the best pictures depend on a proper distance—from the sofa you'll find we'll look charming over a tumbler—and here be two of us, as they say at the Exhibition, *unsold*. I'll trouble you for the sugar-tongs, parson. And, by the way, you should tell that housekeeper of yours not to break the sugar so small, because then it's sugar dust and not lump sugar, and throws one's hand out of gauge, or the net nick to the tumbler—he—hem. Ladies!" bowing gracefully to their health.

"Rollockson's toast," said Melethor—  
"*Lumps of sugar!*"

Great was the laughter at the laird's joke, R. in particular pealing like Bow bells on a birthday, while the parson alternately grinned and blushed, and the ladies

protested, as usual, they did not know what they were laughing at: *lumps* of sugar—a most equivocal phrase if intended to take a complimentary direction sofa-wards; but Miss Rachel thought that so acute a man as the umquhile Master, and an old flame of her own into the bargain, must mean something.

On their retiring to rest for the night, Effie finally and peremptorily insisted on knowing who it was, and her husband, laughing at her importunity, but respecting her anxious sisterly affection, told her *who he thought it was*.

“Well,” replied Effie, “that is stranger still!” And, drawing their eldest boy to her, she sat a good long while by the fire (the room was large, and served for nursery as well), with her hands clasped over the child’s head, in an attitude of profound meditation. The consequence of

which was a private interview with her brother early in the forenoon of next day.

“Is it the case, Logan?” inquired Effie.

My friend looked, as the scoffers would say, a little queer at the question, but collecting his rhetoric, with an affectionate and fraternal caress, he replied: “It is, Effie dear. My destiny has not taken quite the romantic turn that we, perhaps, expected, but still I trust it contains sufficient of the *dulce* to reconcile me to the *utile*. You have done first rate. I like Melethor more than I can express. There are some rugged points and asperities of opinion about him, but these I trust to time and yourself to ameliorate. He is evidently passionately attached to you, and it remains with you to make of him what you please.”

Would the fair reader have thought it? In our hero was fulfilled the saying, that

“Biting and scratching are Scotch folk’s wooing.” Logan married Rachel Shore. And a very happy couple they promise to be the more they become acquainted with each other: the parson thinks his wife a splendid woman, and Rachel thinks her Logan as sturdy a little chanticleer as any in the Presbytery.

The vagaries of Fortune are sometimes not the worst things she scatters in the path of life.

THE END.









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